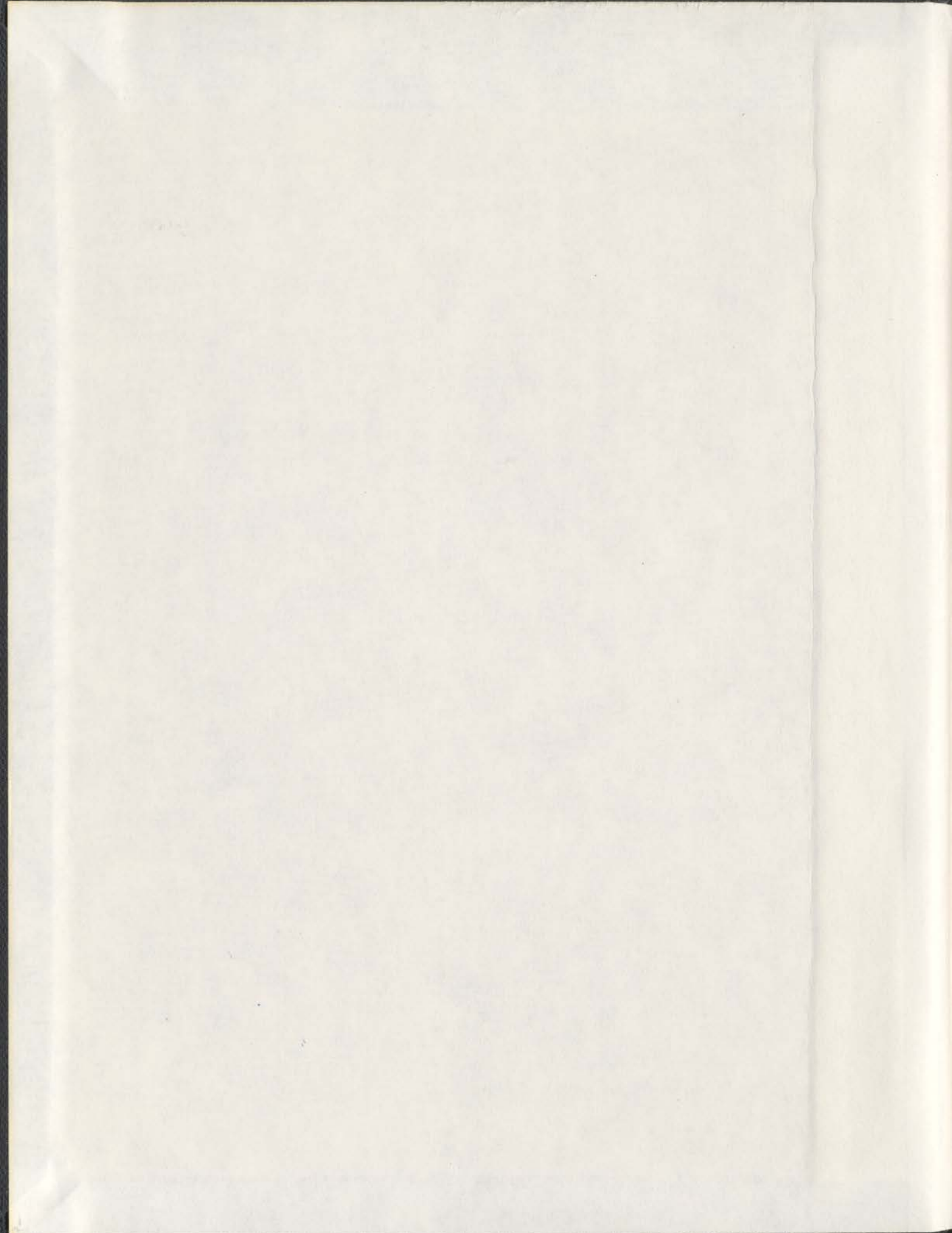


THE MOST (IMAGINED) IRISH PLACE IN THE WORLD?  
THE INTERACTION BETWEEN IRISH AND  
NEWFOUNDLAND MUSICIANS, ELECTRONIC MASS MEDIA,  
AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MUSICAL SENSES OF PLACE

EVELYN OSBORNE









The Most (Imagined) Irish Place in the World?  
The Interaction between Irish and Newfoundland Musicians, Electronic Mass Media, and the  
Construction of Musical Senses of Place

by

Evelyn Osborne

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## **Abstract**

*The Most (Imagined) Irish Place in the World?  
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the Construction of Musical Senses of Place*

Evelyn Osborne

2013

Newfoundland has been described as “the most Irish place outside of Ireland” (McGinn 2000, 8). As a North Atlantic island and a former British colony, Newfoundland shares many ethnic, geographic and economic similarities with Ireland. The actual musical culture in Newfoundland is a blend of western European immigration and musical technological flows. However, the Irish connection is privileged in discourses of musical cultural heritage. This dissertation examines how interactions both live and mediated by radio, television, and recordings between Irish and Newfoundland musicians have contributed to the construction of musical senses of place as having an Irish foundation. Using three case studies of Irish musicians throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, this dissertation examines the construction of Irishness in Newfoundland music, particularly in relation to instrumental (fiddle/accordion) music and musicians.

The first case study examines an Irish-American group, The McNulty Family (1920s-1960s). Newfoundland businessman, J. M. Devine (1876-1959) both featured them on weekly radio shows (ca.1944-1974) and sponsored their 1953 tour of the island. Their music was heard regularly during the development of the Newfoundland recording industry and was highly influential in the establishment of local recorded repertoire.

The second case study examines Ryan's Fancy, a trio of Irishmen who moved to Newfoundland during the cultural revival of the 1970s. They became an integral part of the community and their (inter)national television show (1975-1977) highlighted rural Newfoundland musical traditions through a folklore-based documentary approach.

The final case study examines the interactions between Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh and local St. John's instrumentalists from the late 1980s into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2003, Creagh released a joint CD project entitled *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Newfoundland and Ireland*. This chapter explores how some St. John's musicians perceive Irish music in relation to Newfoundland music.

This work demonstrates that Irish music introduced by electronic mass media is a major component of the Newfoundland recording repertoire and construction of musical senses of place. However, there is also a strong sense of Newfoundland music as a related, but separate, entity. It is often through Irish music and recordings that musicians come to discover and appreciate Newfoundland music.

## Acknowledgements

*For my Aunt, Carmel Osborne (1950-2010)  
Who Loved Our Irish and Newfoundland Music and Heritage*

A research project of this size and length is never written in complete isolation. It requires much help from many sides, and so, I would like to thank everyone who has been instrumental in supporting me in this endeavour. I started research in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador over ten years ago during my master's degree and this research has provided me with the wonderful opportunity to meet countless musicians. Thank you for sharing your time, your tea, conversations, opinions, histories and tunes with me. I have been enriched by all of our conversations. Even those interviews which were not directly quoted in this work have given me a greater depth of understanding of the complex musical culture of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In particular, I would also like to thank Pat Grogan, granddaughter of “Ma” McNulty for her invitation to view the newly deposited McNulty Family Papers at the Archives of Irish America at New York University. Without her support I would not have had access to much of the material I was able to gather for Chapter Five. Thank you to the Devine family, Frank Maher and Monty Barfoot for recalling details from the McNulty Family's visit to St. John's almost 60 years ago. Thank you, as well, to the members of Ryan's Fancy, Fergus O'Byrne, Denis Ryan and James Keane and producers Manny Pittson and Jack Kellum for their valuable assistance and interest in my research. Thank you to all the local and Irish musicians involved in the *Island to Island* CD. In particular, I would like to thank Mick Daly for letting me stay with him in Cork and to



Aidan Coffey, Séamus Creagh and Marie-Annick Desplanques for meeting with me during a busy August. Thank you to Newfoundland musicians Graham Wells, Billy Sutton, Colin Carrigan, Jason Whelan, Rob Brown, Michelle Brophy, Daniel Payne, Christina Smith, Lindsay Ferguson, Angela Pickett, Gerry Strong, Jim Payne, Greg and Ray Walsh and many others for taking the time to speak with me about their musical life stories and many musical ideas. Unfortunately, a few of the musicians and consultants I spoke to during my research passed on during the writing of this dissertation: mouth organist Gerald Quinton (1922-2008), fiddler Kevin Broderick (1923-2008), fiddler Séamus Creagh (1946-2009), and businessman Brendan Devine (1915-2010).

I am indebted to my supervisor Dr. Beverley Diamond whose guidance will continue to influence my future work in this field. My supervisory committee, Dr. Kati Szego and Dr. Neil Rosenberg were also very generous and kind with their feedback. I would also like to thank scholars who allowed me to use their interviews with musicians who had passed away prior to my research. These interviews included a conversation between Eileen McNulty-Grogan and Dr. Pat Byrne and another interview between Dermot O'Reilly and Dr. Diamond. Drs. Philip Hiscock, Peter Narváez, Neil Rosenberg, Michael Taft and Sheldon Posen and musicians Denis Ryan and Anne Devine were kind enough to grant me permission to use their archival collections housed in Memorial University of Newfoundland's Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA).

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in Chapter Seven in this dissertation has been published in the collection *Crossing Over: Fiddle and Dance Studies from Around the North Atlantic 3* (Osborne 2010a; I. Russell and Guigné 2010).

I would like to thank all my family and friends for their general support and understanding. I truly appreciate the work of my aunt, Sylvia Ficken, who designed all the maps found in this document. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Louise and Jim Osborne and my husband Peter Duchemin for their unwavering support and encouragement.

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### *List of Abbreviations*

AIA - Archives of Irish America  
BAM - Brooklyn Academy of Music  
BB - Bonavista Bay  
bpm - Beats per minute  
CB - Conception Bay  
CBC - Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
CCE - *Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Éireann*  
CD - Compact disc  
CJON - Original call letters of NTV  
CLB - Church Lads Brigade  
CNS- Centre for Newfoundland Studies  
GNP - Great Northern Peninsula  
HVGB - Happy Valley-Goose Bay  
IBP - Ireland Business Partnership  
ICEHR - Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research  
ICTM - International Council of Traditional Music  
IFMC - International Folk Music Council  
INP - Ireland-Newfoundland Partnership  
ISER - Institute for Social and Economic Research  
ITMA - Irish Traditional Music Archive  
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding  
MP - Member of Parliament  
MUN - Memorial University of Newfoundland  
MUNFLA - Memorial University of Newfoundland's Folklore and Language  
Archive  
NAFCo- North Atlantic Fiddle Convention  
NB - New Brunswick  
Nfld - Newfoundland  
NL - Newfoundland and Labrador  
NLFAS - Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society  
NS - Nova Scotia  
NTV - Newfoundland Television  
NWR - North West River, Labrador  
NYC - New York City  
NYU - New York University  
OED - Oxford English Dictionary  
ON - Ontario  
PaB - Port aux Basques, NL  
PaP - Port-au-Port Peninsula, NL  
PB - Placentia Bay, NL  
PEI - Prince Edward Island

QC - Quebec  
 RTÉ - *Raidió Teilifís Éireann*  
 SJFMC - St. John's Folk Music Club  
 SS- Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula  
 SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council  
 STEP - Suzuki Talent Education Program  
 TB - Trinity Bay  
 TCH - Trans Canada Highway  
 UK - United Kingdom  
 US or USA - United States of America  
 VOAR – Christian Family Radio, St. John's, NL  
 VOAS - Early Newfoundland AM radio station linked to department store,  
         Ayres and Co.  
 VOCM - “Voice of the Common Man” - AM radio station in St. John's, NL  
 VOGY - Early Newfoundland AM radio station, 1932,  
         Later amalgamated with VONF  
 VONF - “Voice of Newfoundland” - Telegraph Co. (1932-1939),  
         Government-run station (1939-1949)  
 VOWR - Voice of Wesley United Church Radio  
 WIT - Waterford Institute of Technology  
 WWI - World War One  
 WWII - World War Two  
 8WMC - 8 Wesley Methodist Church, the original call name for VOWR

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***Preface:***  
***Situating Myself Within/Without Tradition***

Like so many Newfoundland children of recent generations I did not grow up “on” the water but overlooking it. I surveyed Conception Bay every day from my window, high on a wooded hill, far removed from the fishermen I assumed were at the beach but rarely saw. I loved the water and felt it as part of me, but can count on one hand the number of times I’ve been in a boat on the bay or felt the itchy stickiness of salt water on my skin from swimming. A proud island child, I *can’t* recount the multiple times mummers<sup>1</sup> came to our door, or sitting by my mother’s knee watching, listening and learning the music and movement of the old-time set dances so that I too would, one day, join in the living tradition. In fact, I was a teenager the first time I saw a traditional set dance and I had no idea what they were doing. Yet, instinctively, I knew it was all there, elusively evading me and my “modern-ness.” I grew up with cars, television, telephone, plumbing, and a modern school to which I rode everyday on a yellow bus. My life was not that different from any other Canadian child. Yet I knew these conveniences were all new. In her outport of Princeton, Bonavista Bay (BB), my mother had to wait for the conveniences of telephone and electricity until she was a teenager and her school was never bigger than two rooms. I enjoyed the romanticism of these rural non-amenities on visits to my grandfather’s house – being chased with a sculpin<sup>2</sup> or menaced while in the outhouse by my “ghostly” cousins; picking berries; beach combing for interesting

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<sup>1</sup> Mumming is a masked door-to-door house entertainment tradition. For an introduction see *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* (Halpert and Story 1990).

<sup>2</sup> A sculpin is a hideous scavenger fish with slightly poisonous spines. They are not generally eaten in Newfoundland but they hang around wharves and are often caught by children fishing. It is my belief that their main use is to menace young girls. There are infrequent plans to start a sculpin fishery with either Portugal or China, however to my knowledge, a commercial fishery has not yet begun.



objects; watching the horses and cows in the open field; swimming in the pond; wondering which ghosts were in the attic; seeing the fishermen come in; wondering why my cousins did not get me up at 5 am to go squid jigging; hauling nets; and mummering relatives who kept politely silent on our names for an appropriate amount of time. These were all invaluable memories, all parts of an older, passive sense of place, all of which belonged, and stayed, “around the bay.” Two parts of life – my near “town” life and my ancestral identity safely stowed away “around the bay.” Somehow I always felt I had to fight to claim being a Newfoundlander, and I did, fiercely. I learned to point to cultural identifiers, whether or not I had personally experienced them – “Newf-enese” dialect, fishing, harsh storms, folksong, dancing, partying, humor – the list goes on. I always felt in a bit of a grey area, I had travelled too much, my accent was not thick enough, I was too educated, I played classical violin instead of *really* playing fiddle (as if one precludes the other) and I came from that grey space, Conception Bay South, just beyond the “overpass.”<sup>3</sup> I grew up in the middle of the woods in what is now a suburb. I was not a St. John’s “townie” but close enough to the city to be branded with that brush by everyone else and not accepted as a “bayman.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it is this border sitting which puts me in a unique position to write about my own culture having always been both in and out of it, both in the game of identity “tag” but never quite catching “it.”

I started on the journey that brought me to this dissertation when I was three or four. My parents listened to classical music on the CBC and I’m told that each time a

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<sup>3</sup> The “overpass” is a locally famous demarcation line between the city and rural or the “rest” of Newfoundland. It is simply a small, old bridge on Kenmount Road which passes over Topsail Road. It used to be situated on the Trans-Canada Highway but new highways and major suburban development now make it almost invisible. In June 2011 the old structure was demolished to make way for an expanded multi-lane bridge. The CBC *Seen* blog gives an overview of the bridge’s history (2012).

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Townies and Baymen please see (Laba 1978).

violin was heard I stated emphatically that I wished to learn to play. It turns out that my grandmother had been a classical pianist and violinist but I had never heard her perform. She had been a private music teacher but did not play the local dance music. So at five, I was enrolled in the Suzuki Talent Education Program (STEP) in St. John's and brought to both private and group classes each week. As parental involvement in the child's musical education is of utmost importance in the Suzuki philosophy, my mother also learned violin with me until I was 9. At 7, my parents enrolled me in the new STEP fiddle classes with Christina Smith. Here we learned many of the standard Newfoundland tunes such as "Mussels in the Corner" and pieces from the repertoires of famous Newfoundland fiddlers Rufus Guinchard (1899-1990) and Emile Benoit (1913-1992) such as "Pretty Little Mary" and "Flying Reel." I remember sitting on the floor, being fascinated by Guinchard's incredibly fast foot work. As part of the performing group we played all over the city from the Shriners Club to the Lieutenant Governor's garden party. That said, I did not seek out, or know where to look for, more Newfoundland tunes and classical repertoire was still my main activity. I did the whole "classical kid" scenario from youth orchestras, chamber ensembles, festivals, competitions, concerts and music school auditions. Throughout this time, fiddle was always a side project.

After high school I moved to Ottawa with my family and attended the University of Ottawa where I earned an undergraduate degree in violin. Suddenly a very small fish in a big pond, I wore my Newfoundlander-ness on my sleeve to make me unique and interesting. I picked and chose what being a Newfoundlander meant depending on with

whom I was speaking and did my best to debate away negative stereotypes.<sup>5</sup> It was during my time in Ottawa that I became aware that the Newfoundland fiddling I had learned was stylistically different from fiddling in mainland Canada. A number of small events helped me form this opinion. One day while busking I noticed a young man standing nearby listening. After a while he came over and asked if I had studied with Christina Smith in St. John's. This was Colin Carrigan, a Newfoundland fiddler, a few years older than I was.<sup>6</sup> He had studied with fiddler Kelly Russell and recognized both the Newfoundland repertoire and the style. While in music school I made some pocket money by playing in a "Celtic" pub band, the sort that sounds best when both the musicians and audience are drunk. One night a man came over and *told* me I was a Newfoundland fiddler. Taken aback, I asked how he knew, as I had been playing standard North American tunes like "St. Anne's Reel" and the "Irish Washerwoman." He stated that it was the "drive" in the music, that "once you start you don't stop until you're finished." The final straw was perhaps *the* fiddle contest. I had started teaching an adult "learn to play the east coast fiddle" course at Algonquin College. My students all encouraged me to enter a fiddle contest. Fiddle contests are not common in NL but are a mainstay of the tradition in Ontario.<sup>7</sup> I agreed, and prepared the required waltz, jig and reel. I already knew that my material would be a bit different, but I had no idea how different! I had not realized that it was an Ottawa Valley fiddle style competition and my tunes stuck out like a sore thumb! It was close to a disaster! The assigned pianist did not

---

<sup>5</sup> As is discussed in Chapter Three, there are a number of negative stereotypes of Newfoundlanders which run along the lines of being poor, uneducated and stupid. Many of the distasteful "Newfie" jokes are similar to ones told about other marginalized groups such as the Polish.

<sup>6</sup> Carrigan has been a vital part of this research starting in 2001.

<sup>7</sup> There is a recording of a fiddle contest held in 1981 in MUNFLA (see G. Bradley 1981, MUNFLA 81-506). Sherry Johnson has written extensively about fiddle contests in Ontario (S. Johnson 2006).

have a clue how to chord to my tunes and got lost. To top it off the judges thought my jig was a hornpipe and marked it zero. I was stunned and could not understand why my 6/8 jig with the quarter-eighth note pattern was not a jig to them. The audience, however, loved it and the general opinion was that I should have placed, despite playing something different with “perhaps a bit of Irish in it.” This event, in particular, made me want to research Newfoundland fiddle music. My initial literature search found little information; NL was basically lumped in with the rest of the “east coast style” defined by Don Messer. Only fiddlers Rufus Guinchard and Emile Benoit were noted in the literature and there were no discussions of accordionists (Proctor and Miller 1981, 325-326). There were only a couple of resources on fiddling in Newfoundland. There was an out-of-print biography of Rufus Guinchard by fiddler Kelly Russell, a discography compiled by Neil Rosenberg, and Colin Quigley’s masters’ and doctoral work and corresponding books on Bonavista Bay dance music and French-Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit. However, at the time, there were no “learn Newfoundland fiddle” books as there were for Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton or P.E.I fiddling which pointed out this ornament or that bow technique.<sup>8</sup> I knew that there was something different, still an elusivity which I wished to pursue. I periodically attended Irish sessions in Ottawa and found that I would sit there for long periods listening to lovely, unfamiliar Irish music until either Colin Carrigan or Greg Brown (another NL ex-pat) played a Newfoundland tune. The interesting thing was that, whether or not I knew the NL tune it was always recognizable to me, whereas the Irish tunes seemed to blend together. This seemed

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<sup>8</sup> There are now several tune books by Kelly Russell and Christina Smith (K. Russell 1992, 2000, 2003, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; C. Smith 2006, 2008a, 2008b) There are also instructional DVDs by Daniel Payne for the Newfoundland button accordion (D. Payne 2007a, 2010, 2011).

contradictory to me as I was often told that Newfoundland was culturally and musically Irish. This was an identity I did not embrace despite my great-grandfather Malone's immigration from Ireland. Having grown up hearing about the Newfoundland nationalistic culture of the 1970s and early 1980s I believed that Newfoundland was not indebted to Ireland or anywhere else and had a strong, independent culture of its own. I realized, however, that many people felt differently and a sense of Irishness, if not a full Irish identity, was important to them, particularly from a geographical, historical and musical-cultural point of view.

Eventually I decided to enter a M.A. in Canadian Studies at Carleton University and study NL fiddle traditions with supervision from Dr. Elaine Keillor. I travelled home to NL several times and did a great deal of fieldwork, interviewing and playing with fiddlers from all over the island and making friends with an older generation. I focused on the dance repertoire from two communities in Conception (CB) and Bonavista Bays (BB) and the oral history of dance musicians I met there. Subsequently, I decided to return to pursue more academic study in order understand the disconnect I felt between being told my music was Irish and the dance tunes I knew.

Many doctoral students seek to write what ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl calls the "meat and potatoes" book; the one defining work encompassing the musics of a certain region or people, particularly one in danger of extinction (2006, 233-234). With the best of intentions, I had hoped to do such work with the aural instrumental dance music of my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). When I started, it was my intention to "save" the music before it was lost, and my masters' research worked towards this goal (2003). Once I moved "home," I realized that the tradition is vibrant,

and many musicians are already learning and preserving older aural traditional musics.<sup>9</sup> Newfoundland dance tunes are reworked into new contexts of sessions, stage performance or recordings, which are, at least partially, mediated through the expectations of the global recording industry aesthetics and standards.<sup>10</sup> New publications of tune collections and recordings circumvent the oral tradition model of face-to-face contact and allow players to learn tunes from elder fiddlers they have never met. When I returned to St. John's in 2004, I was surprised to hear how much of the international Irish session music was being played by fiddlers of my generation; and how few of the older dance tunes are performed regularly at sessions. There are a substantial number of sessions for a small city. The musical scene in Newfoundland, and more specifically in St. John's, is not homogenous, even within the traditional/folk music context. This scene is complex and multifaceted with an ever changing flow of people, music, ideas and ideals.

So here I find myself, moved home to Newfoundland to research, learn and write about this tradition which has, like me, an interesting balance between the traditional and the modern and a constant negotiation between an Irish, English, French and Newfoundland senses of place. Once here, I found the perception that Newfoundland music is inherently Irish was quite strong and contrary to the impressions with which I had grown up. This led me to investigate the influence of mass media on the construction of musical senses of place. Ireland was just one of several points of historical

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<sup>9</sup> The community dances which formed the basis of the tradition gradually faded out in the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century leaving many dance players without a performance venue. Now in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century there is the start of a strong dance revival which will hopefully provide a space for the surviving music to thrive both on and off stage.

<sup>10</sup> The following are a few examples (Creagh and Desplanques 2003; Crowd of Bold Sharemen 2002; D. Payne 2008; J. Payne and O'Bryne 1995; Snotty Var 1997; Wren Trust et al. 2010).

immigration to Newfoundland, but the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Irish music recording industry has had a major impact on the development of a Newfoundland recording repertoire and aesthetic. I was told time and time again about three particular groups who were influential in the construction of Newfoundland musical Irishness: the McNulty Family, Ryan's Fancy and fiddler Séamus Creagh. The final realization that pursuing an investigation into the influence of Irish musicians in the Newfoundland tradition was needed was sealed when I read folklorist's Pat Byrne's article "Stage Irish in Britain's Oldest Colony" (1991). In this article he names the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy as instrumental in helping to construct a sense of Irish musicality in Newfoundland. His article gave me a starting point for a deeper study of the interaction between Newfoundland and Irish musics and musicians. I'm looking into my own musical senses of place through the lens of the fiddle and accordion music, as well as some of the songs, for my little nation, Newfoundland and Labrador. Perhaps by examining the balance of Newfoundland and Irish music I'll find what it means to be of the new generation of musical Newfoundlander in a global world. The dissertation which I thought was going to "save" this music is instead a view into the living tradition of Newfoundland fiddle and accordion music through the fingers and mouths of its practitioners.

## **Chapter One:** ***Methodology***

*Outside of Ireland itself,  
there is probably no more Irish place in the world  
than Newfoundland.*

–Tim Pat Coogan, Irish historian (2001, 415).

### ***1.1 Introduction and Central Question***

Irish historian-author Tim Pat Coogan visited Newfoundland in the 1990s and was moved to express the view that:

Nowhere in Canada, or indeed in the world, outside Ireland itself, is the Irish presence so strongly felt as in Newfoundland. In St. John's one is aware of Irish resonances on all sides, resonances of music, personality, physiognomy and history... 'Newfoundland music' is unmistakably Irish in influence and Irish music sessions are a feature of the Newfoundland pub scene. (ibid., 415, 417)

The rocky landscape, foggy weather, friendly people and the slightly Hiberno-English St. John's accent often remind visitors of Ireland. As an extension, Newfoundland and Labrador musical culture is often assumed to be a product of Irish ancestry. By using scare quotes around 'Newfoundland music' Coogan strongly suggests that it is a replication of Irish music rather than a rich, multi-sourced music and yet the picture is much more complex. Today, Newfoundland music that is labelled traditional<sup>11</sup> is comprised of musics handed down through generations of English, Irish, Scottish and French ancestors, as well as local compositions, and music exchanged through cultural or

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<sup>11</sup> "Traditional" can be a loaded term yet almost all of the musicians I worked with describe themselves as "traditional" musicians. Thus I will use the term as they have used it. For a more detailed discussion of the term please see the literature review in Chapter Two, Section 2.2.



technological flows via printed media, radio, television, recordings and personal contact between near and far musicians. This dissertation examines the interplay and space between the belief in traditional Newfoundland instrumental music as Irish and the actual musical practices of Irish and Newfoundland musicians within the province. Erlmann states, “it is this tension between a total system and the various local cultural practices that opens up a space for ethnography” (1996, 474). It is my theory, inspired by folklorist Pat Byrne’s article, “Stage Irish in Britain’s Oldest Colony,” that much of Newfoundland’s identification with Ireland is a relatively recent phenomenon (1991, 59). Musically, this identification is fuelled more by factors such as contact with Irish musicians living or travelling in Newfoundland, as well as radio, television and recordings, rather than by a strong and enduring historical-cultural link back to the Emerald Isle. I have found through my research that even when Irish and Newfoundland musicians verbally adhere to the belief that Newfoundland music is essentially Irish, some of their actions subvert this overt assumption and work to construct Newfoundland as a musically separate, if related, place. I join the ranks of scholars who are contesting the construction of Newfoundland culture and character as inherently Irish (P. Byrne 1991; Farquharson 2008; Harris-Walsh 2008, 2009; Keough 2008a; T. MacDonald 1999; Trew 2005). Therefore, I seek to examine and ask the following central question:

How have factors, including cultural history, visiting Irish musicians, and electronic mass media such as radio, television and sound recordings influenced the construction of a musical senses of place for late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century traditional instrumentalists in Newfoundland and Labrador?

This question could easily be turned around to ask: How have Newfoundland traditional instrumental musicians perceived themselves in relation to Irish music, during different decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, in a culture that highlights its connections to Ireland? How has Irishness been redefined in Newfoundland by both mass media and changing experiences and imaginings of place?

This dissertation examines Irish musicians from three time periods and their role in shaping the construction of place in Irish-Newfoundland instrumental music. The musicians are: the Irish-American group, the McNulty family in the 1940s and 1950s; Ryan's Fancy who moved to St. John's in the 1970s; and fiddler Séamus Creagh (1946-2009) and Rob Murphy, flutist, who lived in Newfoundland in the 1980s and 1990s. Although the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy were primarily song bands it is apparent that they were influential in the development of local ideas of what constituted Newfoundland music.

I examine themes of electronic mass media and place in relation to each case study. All of these musicians have interacted with, and positioned themselves, in relation to Irish and Newfoundland musics uniquely. Through this examination, I seek to nuance the understanding of Newfoundland traditional music as an intricately woven pattern of musics transmitted through musical ancestries, media, and specific musicians with whom Newfoundlanders identify and who, in turn, identify with Newfoundland. I take as a basic assumption for the dissertation as a whole, folklorist Herbert Halpert's assertion from his preface to Taft's *Regional Discography of Newfoundland (1904-1972)*, that:

A vigorous folk culture is not overwhelmed by modern commercial music. It does not feel impelled to absorb all the new musical idioms to which it is exposed. Apparently, a strong culture is able to adopt selectively from many styles only

those elements that it wants, those that it can adjust to its own way of feeling.  
(Halpert 1975, v)

The idea of selective absorption and adjustment should be remembered throughout this dissertation. As my research shows, Irish musics have played a major role in the development of the Newfoundland recording repertoire and, in turn, the perception of Newfoundland music as Irish. However, this was not a one-way uncritical absorption of Irish music. The musicians I examine here also interacted with and promoted, to varying degrees, Newfoundland music as its own tradition. Irish music has struck a chord with many Newfoundlanders; yet they also “adjust” it or translate it into a form which speaks to their experiences of place within Newfoundland.

Much of the scholarship regarding Newfoundland music has focused on the traditional forms in an aural/oral community context. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I believe it is important to acknowledge, and discuss, the various impacts of commercialized traditional musics which have been embraced and integrated into a people’s musical repertoire and which stand beside their inherited oral/aural traditions.

### ***1.1.1 Sub Questions***

A central question leads to other questions which my research partially illuminates. I consider the following questions to be a portion of the larger whole of this research:

What is the space, and interplay, between the perception of Newfoundland music as stemming from Ireland and Newfoundland music becoming its own recognizable and independent music? How do local musicians, particularly in the St. John’s region,

negotiate the perception of Irishness within their personal musical practices? What are the perceived differences and/or similarities between Newfoundland and Irish musics? How have the three international Irish revivals (ca. 1940s, 1970s, 1990s/2000s) affected individual musicians and their musical senses of place, choices and musical styles? What are the personal experiences and impressions of Newfoundland musicians who have played in Ireland? How was their music received?

## *1.2 Geography*



Map One: Newfoundland and Labrador in the Northern Hemisphere<sup>12</sup>

Newfoundland and Labrador is the easternmost province of Canada, illustrated by Map One above. The province has two landmasses, Labrador and Newfoundland.

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<sup>12</sup> All maps were designed by Sylvia Ficken.

Newfoundland is a large island situated in the North Atlantic at the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence while Labrador occupies the most easterly and northern portion of the Canadian continental landmass.<sup>13</sup> For the most part, my study has been concentrated on the island of Newfoundland itself and I will therefore refer to Newfoundland rather than Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, my study focuses on musicians in the St. John's region of the north-eastern section of the Avalon Peninsula, but is informed by contact with musicians throughout the province. As can be seen in Map Two below, the province is divided into regions according to topography and geography.<sup>14</sup>

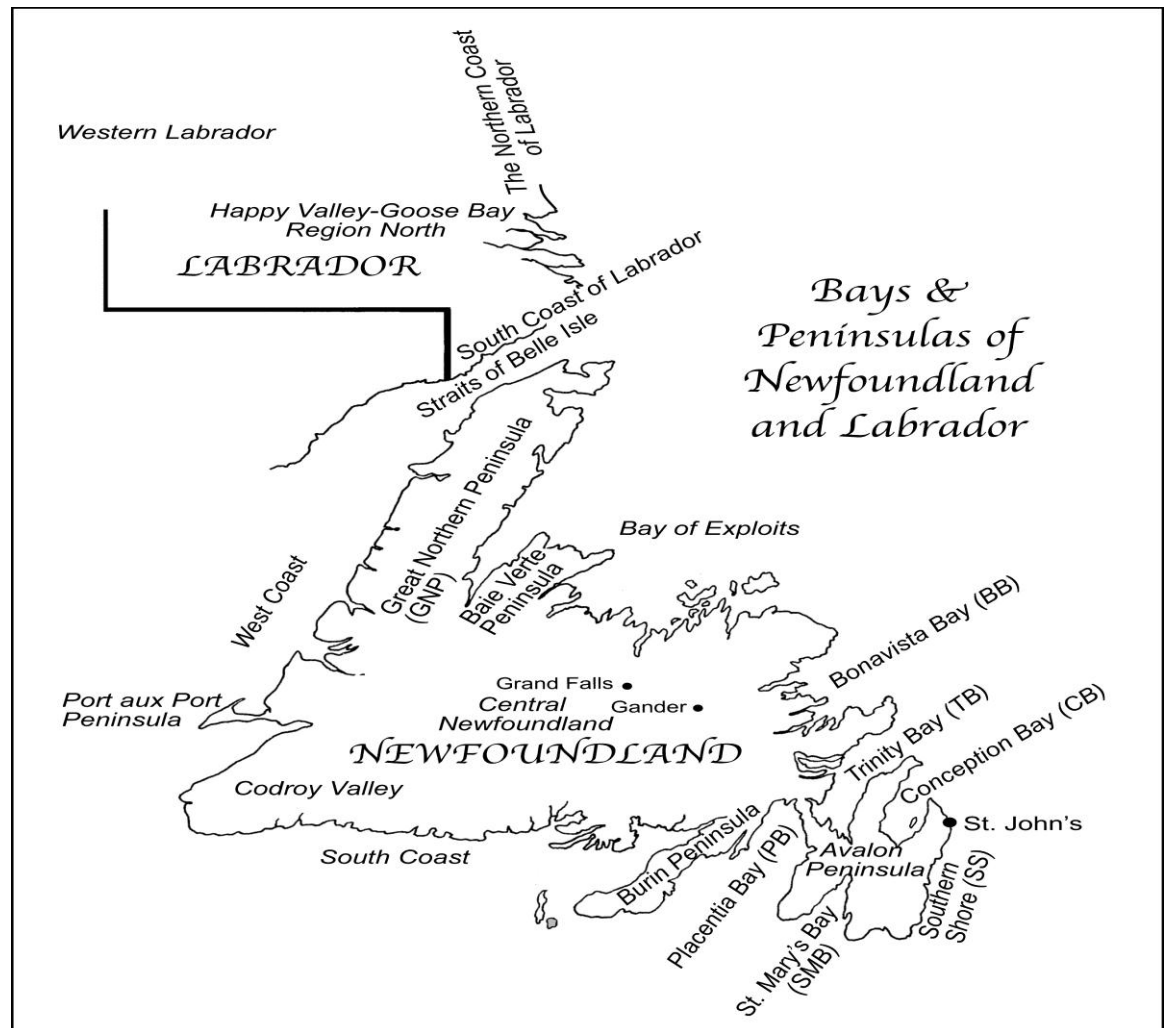
Newfoundland and Labrador has a natural-resources based economy which for centuries relied upon the fishery and has recently turned to offshore oil. After a moratorium was instated on the staple cod fishery in 1992, the province quickly lost population to out-migration (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador ca. 2010, np). Historically and economically, the province has struggled due to its reliance on the fishery, however with the switch to oil Newfoundland became known as a “have”

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<sup>13</sup> The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's website states that the province as a whole occupies 405,720 square kilometers with an estimated population of 508,410 people in April of 2011 (ca. 2011a, np; ca. 2011b, np). Over half of the provincial population lives in the most easterly section of the island on the Avalon Peninsula, close to the capital city of St. John's (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador ca. 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Labrador is generally spoken of in four regions: 1 - Western Labrador around Labrador City-Wabush at the Quebec border; 2 - The Northern Coast – stretching from Makkovik to the most northerly year-round settlement of Nain; 3 - Happy Valley-Goose Bay region which includes North West River, Rigolet and Cartwright; 4 - South Coast of Labrador – this area includes Blanc Sablon just inside the Quebec border, and stretches along the Straits of Belle Isle to Battle Harbour. Although Blanc Sablon is part of Quebec, it is connected to the northern peninsula of the island by ferry and by road to the southern Labrador coast. It is more easily connected to Newfoundland and Labrador than the central regions of Quebec. The Island portion of the province is generally divided by peninsulas and bays. Starting with the Avalon Peninsula where the capital of St. John's is located; the southern shore (SS) of the Avalon, known as the Irish Loop; Conception Bay (CB); and St. Mary's Bay (SMB). Moving north-westward there is Trinity (TB), Placentia (PB) and Bonavista Bays (BB) followed by the Baie Verte Peninsula, the Great Northern Peninsula (GNP), the West Coast, Codroy Valley and South Coast of the island. There is also Central Newfoundland which includes the inland towns of Gander and Grand Falls in the eastern section of the island.

province in 2008 just after the global financial crisis.<sup>15</sup> Historically, Newfoundland was more connected culturally and economically to Europe and the eastern seaboard of the United States than to Canada which it joined in 1949. This cultural and political history will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.



Map Two: Bays and Peninsulas of Newfoundland and Labrador

<sup>15</sup> The Canadian federation is structured so that richer provinces support poorer regions through transfer payments. For 59 years Newfoundland received transfer payments and was referred to as a “have-not” province. Not long after signing of an MOU with the Hebron oil company, in August 2008, to develop offshore reserves Newfoundland’s finances changed and became a “have” province. In November 2008 it was announced that Newfoundland would stop receiving funds and pay its first transfer payment to another less fortunate province, Ontario (CBC 2008).

### ***1.3 Scope of the Project***

The first two case studies focus on historical research and the experiences of specific Irish musicians in Newfoundland. The last study highlights the opinions and practices of contemporary Newfoundland musicians themselves. I focus on how these musicians negotiate the lines between playing what they distinguish as Newfoundland and Irish musics in a province which is both articulating itself separate from Canada and leaning towards a perception that suggests Newfoundlanders are culturally Irish in nature. Instead of attempting to define a style, I am focusing on how musicians negotiate the range of repertoires with which they identify. I examine the influences from earlier periods of the twentieth century and explore the impact these early groups have had on today's Newfoundland musician, particularly in the St. John's region.

This dissertation does not attempt to deal with song repertoire in any in-depth manner; however, it is important to note that many of the influential Irish musicians who have helped shape the Newfoundland tradition, including the musicians in the first two case studies, worked primarily in song. As song is ubiquitous, it is, by default, a major factor in the musical development of all Newfoundland musicians and must be considered as an integral influence on instrumental musicians' musical senses of place.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For fiddlers to avoid listening to, or learning songs, would be both difficult and undesirable. Such a habit would seriously limit the scope of their social and musical practice and experience.

#### ***1.4 Methodology and Fieldwork Conducted***<sup>17</sup>

I began this research in December 2000, after which I travelled several times to Newfoundland from Ottawa. During these field trips, I interviewed fiddlers from all over the island for my master's thesis. That research, conducted between 2000 and 2002, included the collection and study of many different types of information, including oral history of communities and families, instrumental music, folk songs, fairy stories, sea lore, occupational folk life and personal musical histories. Talking to the older generation of dance fiddlers gave me a sense of reconnecting to my roots and history. As I did not have an opportunity to attend the community square dances I learned about them through the oral histories of my interviewees. I began interviewing again in 2007 and continued researching until 2011. [Please see Map Three below.]

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<sup>17</sup> This fieldwork research was approved by Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) under the following proposal number (ICEHR Proposal No. 2005/06-066-MU)





Map Three: Communities Visited Between 2000 and 2011

#### ***1.4.1 Master's Fieldwork***

Over forty musicians are represented in my master's collection ranging from age 8 to 95, from over twenty different communities. The interviews represent approximately

ninety hours of recorded sound and forty-two hours of corresponding video (2008b).<sup>18</sup> This previous research is one of the largest collections of Newfoundland instrumental music and informs this dissertation. My master's thesis, "'We Never Had a Bed Like That for a Violin! We Had a Bag!' Exploring Fiddlers and Dance Music in Newfoundland: Red Cliff, Bonavista Bay and Bay de Verde, Conception Bay" (2003), focused on the historical dance music tradition in these two communities through the oral histories of musicians.

#### ***1.4.2 Follow-up Interviews***

During the research for this dissertation I revisited a number of my consultants and met many more musicians. Rarely have longitudinal studies been conducted with Newfoundland musicians and I plan to continue this line of research in the future, eventually developing a long term picture of how the life of a traditional musician is changing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Such an in-depth study over time will add to the understanding and evolution of traditional music in our province. Between 2007 and 2008, I revisited musicians Ray and Greg Walsh, Daniel Payne, Colin Carrigan, Danette Eddy Lawless and Joseph AuCoin. Multi-instrumentalist Daniel Payne has been a prominent player in the Newfoundland scene since my first conversation with him in 2001 and he expresses very articulate and well-thought-out opinions. Colin Carrigan was one of the first fiddlers I interviewed in 2001, partly as I had known him both in

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<sup>18</sup> In April 2006 the Smallwood Foundation granted me funds to digitize this collection, deposit it in the Memorial University's Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) as well as return copies of conversations to informants and/or their families. This project, called "Digitization of a Newfoundland Fiddle Collection," is ongoing and is held under the accession number MUNFLA2008-002.

Newfoundland and again in Ottawa. I returned to speak to him in Halifax in 2007 about his role in the *Island to Island* CD which is the case study in Chapter Seven. Danette Eddy Lawless was also a childhood acquaintance known for her fiddling ability and I spoke to her in 2001 just prior to her departure for a one-year master's program in ethnomusicology at the University of Limerick. I spoke with her again in 2007 when she had subsequently settled and married in Ireland. Fiddler Joseph AuCoin lives in the Codroy Valley, and while I do not deal with his music specifically in this dissertation his experience of Scottish-Newfoundland music has provided an alternative to many voices which state that Newfoundland music is all Irish (AuCoin et al. 2001; AuCoin 2007). He was also kind enough to introduce me to other musicians in the region (Keeping 2008; McArthur 2007; Pearce et al. 2008).

The most effective follow-up interviews were those with the Walsh family and Colin Carrigan. Research with the Walsh family allowed me to identify stories they tell about their family music which were almost identical in the telling six to seven years apart and understand where their opinions had changed. Carrigan's career had shifted and evolved significantly in the intervening years and our conversation changed accordingly. In 2001, we discussed the common ideas regarding Newfoundland fiddle music including stories about Rufus Guinchard and Emile Benoit, as well as, basic tune terminology and structure. In 2007, we discussed festivals, perceptions of Newfoundland music, studio techniques and repertoire selection for *Island to Island*.

### ***1.4.3 Doctoral Fieldwork – Newfoundland and Labrador***

The research carried out since 2004 for this dissertation has been widespread including interviews with over sixty musicians, producers, dancers, and fans in Ireland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, New York, Labrador and Newfoundland. [For a list of research activities cited in this work please see Appendix Nine.]

At the start of my doctoral research I interviewed broadly to get a sense of how I might focus my topic. During this time period I interviewed musicians who were recommended by others and I sought out musicians in areas of the province I had yet to visit such as Labrador, the Southern Shore and Fogo Island. In May 2007, I was artist-in-residence for the Northern Soundscapes project at J. R. Smallwood Middle School in Labrador City-Wabush. On my way back to St. John's Labrador Air was kind enough to allow me a long stop-over in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. During my stay I was able to interview several people in North West River including two members of the famous musical Montague family (Lester Montague 2007a; Louis Montague 2007b). That summer I was able to revisit the Codroy Valley, and meet new fiddlers on Fogo Island (Combden 2007; Emberley 2007; Shea 2007). I returned to the Codroy Valley again in May of 2008 and met musicians in Port-aux-Basques and South Branch (Keeping 2008; Pearce et al. 2008). In July 2007, I travelled down the Southern Shore to attend the Shamrock Festival and to speak to a few musicians there (Barbour et al. 2007; Mooney 2007).<sup>19</sup> Although the majority of these interviews are not referenced in this dissertation, they have helped provide me with a broad overview of the Newfoundland traditional

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<sup>19</sup> Travelling around the island and to Nova Scotia was facilitated by the support of a research grant from the J. R. Smallwood Foundation of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

music scene. Such wide-ranging research has helped me understand the scope of traditional music practices throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and how they have changed over time in different regions.

About a year and a half into my research and writing I realized that if I were to address the influence of Irish musicians in Newfoundland I needed to investigate both the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy. Both of these groups had been mentioned to me frequently over the years but I had not paid much attention as I considered them to be commercialized, rather than purely traditional. I had intended to work with purely aural traditions but found that many of the musicians I spoke with cited influences from commercial Irish music, particularly the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy. Fiddler Séamus Creagh and flutist Rob Murphy were also cited by the generation of "fiddlers" who came to the music in the 1980s and 1990s. Thus I decided to investigate the influences of Irish music in Newfoundland and recognize its contributions to the shaping of Newfoundland musical senses of place. This marked a major turning point in my research and has allowed me to take a perspective on Newfoundland music which has rarely been explored. The McNulty Family represented a group unlike any other that had visited Newfoundland in terms of length of time on radio and influence of recordings. Ryan's Fancy, however, had performed during a folk revival period when several Irish bands had toured here, including the Sons of Erin. In the end, I decided to examine Ryan's Fancy instead of Sons of Erin, due to their wide scope of influence through live performance, recordings and television shows.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Neil Rosenberg began research on the Sons of Erin in the 1970s and 1980s. There is ample room for more work to be done on this interesting and important group.

Once I had selected my specific case studies I focused my interviewing around musicians, primarily in St. John's, who were related to these studies. For the McNulty Family case study I spoke to Newfoundland fans Frank Maher and Monty Barfoot who remembered the radio series and concerts. In New York I interviewed other musicians who worked with the McNulty Family. In researching Ryan's Fancy I spoke in-person to original member Fergus O'Byrne and by phone with members Denis Ryan and James Keane and producers Manny Pittson and Jack Kellum. I also spoke to others who were recommended to me by O'Byrne such as bar owners Ralph O'Brien (2008) and Brenda O'Reilly (2010). To widen my understanding of the era, in 2010 I also interviewed a few prominent musicians who were active at the time including Don Walsh, Jim Payne, Gordon Quinton and Christina Smith. In this area I could have gone into great depth and spoken to many more people. I limited my interviews due to time and scope but hope to continue exploring the music of the 1970s Newfoundland folk revival in the future. For the *Island to Island* CD I spoke to the St. John's musicians involved and to others who have spent significant time in Ireland.

#### ***1.4.4 Doctoral Fieldwork – Ireland***

In August 2007, I was able to travel to Ireland for a month with the generous help of the Ireland-Canada University Fund's Sprott Scholarship. [Please see Map Four below.] I interviewed the Irish musicians involved with the *Island to Island* CD in Cork, attended local sessions and played with many musicians. Participating in regular musical activities in Cork gave me a greater sense of the nature and extent of the connections between Cork and St. John's. For example, several St. John's musicians have spent time

in Cork and the two cities share a similar session repertoire. I was able to tell this from a tactile point of view as my fingers found the tunes more readily in the pubs of Cork than elsewhere in Ireland or Canada. This would suggest that by having spent time in Cork, these musicians brought back specific favorites which were then learned by other St. John's musicians.



Map Four: Ireland 2007

I also had a phone conversation with Liam Reiss of the Newfoundland and Labrador Studies Centre at the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) regarding his role in the recently developed *Festival of the Sea* which alternates between Newfoundland's Southern Shore (an Irish area south of St. John's on the Avalon

Peninsula) and south western Ireland (Wexford and Waterford). Over the last few years this festival has brought Newfoundland and Irish musicians, artists and business people, together to find common linkages in their fields. The reason for the specific geographical locations selected relate to historical links between Ireland's southwest and Newfoundland's fishery and settlement.

Later in the month, I was also able to attend the *Scoil Eipse*, a five-day summer school which provides intense instruction in Irish music. The *Scoil Eipse* is held in the week prior to the international All Ireland competitions, or *Fleadh*, which is hosted every year by *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí*, the national Irish culture association. The *Fleadh* attracts both musicians and audience members from around the world. In 2007, it was held in Tullamore, County Offaly. Normally a town of 16,000 it swelled to 250,000 during the week of August 18-26, 2007. During the *Scoil Eipse* I studied with Kathleen Nesbit, a well-known fiddler from Sligo, who focused her attention on recently composed music within the Irish tradition. This was particularly interesting as I have focused my previous attention on traditional and largely anonymous musics of Newfoundland. Except for the folk composers Emile Benoit and Rufus Guinchard, Newfoundland is not widely recognized for its instrumental composing although many musicians in the younger generations are now writing tunes. Ireland, however, has a vibrant and recognized line of composers who renew and invigorate the tradition regularly with new music. This school and festival provided me the opportunity to see and experience Irish music on an international scale. I also travelled around the country and played with musicians informally in Kerry and East Clare. Overall, the experience of going to Ireland allowed me a new perspective on the Irish music played in Newfoundland.



#### ***1.4.5 Doctoral Fieldwork – New York City, New York***

When I first started my McNulty Family case study I had found it difficult to find extensive materials. By chance I was connected with Pat Grogan, singer Eileen McNulty-Grogan's daughter and granddaughter of Ann 'Ma' McNulty. Grogan in turn put me in touch with discographer Ted McGraw who was also working on the McNulty Family. I communicated to both of them extensively by email and they were extremely helpful in answering questions and providing information to which I would not have otherwise had access. In May 2010, I received an Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) grant to continue my work at the Archives of Irish America (AIA) at New York University (NYU). Ms. Grogan had recently deposited her family papers at the AIA and was travelling there in August 2010. She was kind enough to invite me along to examine the collection which had not, at that point, been open for public examination. In New York I worked with Grogan who is very interested in supporting scholarly work on her family's musical career. Grogan arranged for interviews with New York musicians who had worked with the McNultys and a dancer who had been in their show (McDonnell 2010; Noonan and O'Dowd 2010). Grogan acted as the primary interviewer and I asked questions as a secondary interviewer. The McNulty Family Papers are extensive and I did a follow-up trip in March 2011. During this trip I continued to examine the collection and attended a tribute concert for the McNulty

Family performed by folklorist Mick Moloney and friends.<sup>21</sup> This has turned into a rich area of research and one I intend to examine further in the future.

#### ***1.4.6 Doctoral Fieldwork – Other locations in Canada and interviews by telephone and email***

During my other travels I connected with musicians related to my research but who no longer lived in Newfoundland. One such musician was Colin Carrigan, who had moved to Halifax, and another was Lindsay Ferguson, who lives in Wakefield, Quebec. I conducted telephone interviews with television producers Manny Pittson and with Jack Kellum in Nova Scotia (NS) and Ontario (ON) respectively. I did two other telephone interviews with Ryan's Fancy members Denis Ryan (Nova Scotia) and James Keane (New York). I worked extensively with Ted McGraw (New York State) and Pat Grogan (California) by email regarding the McNulty Family.

#### ***1.5 Interview Techniques***

The majority of my interviews have been the standard 'one-on-one' folklore interview in which I make contact in advance and arrange a time to meet. I have found that the vast majority of people wish to be interviewed in their home. When I arrived at the interviewee's house, we'd sit, discuss and play music for a few hours. We were usually left alone by family members who did not wish to disturb us despite my invitation to participate if they so wished. Just as often wives or children filtered in, and out, of the interview space naturally. My approach to interviewing is a quasi-structured but informal

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<sup>21</sup> This concert was held at the Symphony Space on March 11, 2011.

one, in which I have an outline of the material I would like to cover but no obvious list in front of me. This approach allows room for interviewees to diverge from my line of questioning and focus on what they think is most important. The few times I did have a list of questions I found them restrictive, because the interviewee, in an effort to be helpful, went through the list answering the questions and did not feel free enough to expand into other areas. A list was useful in at least one instance in which the interviewee's health was poor and having the list in advance allowed him time to consider his answers and be precise with the limited time we had.

Most interviews were between 90 minutes and two hours with quite a few running towards three hours and only a handful being under an hour. The conversations of less than an hour were usually conducted by phone or involved non-musicians such as the administrator Kristy Clarke of the Ireland-Newfoundland Partnership or television producer Manny Pittson (Clarke 2008; Pittson 2010c). I took notes during several non-recorded telephone conversations including: folklorist Wilf Wareham regarding his role in the Ryan's Fancy show; David Maunder, producer of the *Big 6* radio show; and Liam Reiss, head of Newfoundland Studies and the Festival of the Sea at WIT.

I conducted some group interviews, in relation to the *Island to Island* CD, in which I interviewed the Irish and Newfoundland musicians in groups in their respective communities (Creagh et al. 2007; Sutton et al. 2008). I also interviewed some husband and wife pairs (H. Oliver and S. Oliver 2001; G. Quinton and H. Quinton 2001; D. Randell and F. Randell 2001). In one case, when I went to interview Brendan Devine (1915-2010) about his family's connection to the McNulty Family, both his wife and daughter were present as part of the interview and helped correct Mr. Devine's

sometimes faulty memory (B. Devine et al. 2010). Unfortunately, about six months after our interview Mr. Devine passed away at age 95.

The interviews I conducted changed in both content and demographics over the years. For the most part my master's and the early PhD research included older musicians who had been a part of the dance tradition and lived outside of urban St. John's. These interviews involved travelling to their location with an introduction before I arrived. Once in the region I asked for more introductions and attempted to connect with other musicians. I always phoned (and increasingly emailed) ahead to introduce myself and explain my work. I never showed up on someone's doorstep to ask for an interview on the spot. I do not recall ever being turned down for an interview when I was able to communicate with a musician personally. In one case, I had hoped to speak with Wilf Doyle, the first Newfoundland accordion recording artist, but his daughter to whom I spoke felt he was not well enough to be interviewed. For the most part, everyone seemed quite interested in what I was doing. A few times musicians modestly thought they did not have much to offer, but after some reassurances that their experiences were important they willingly participated. Near the end of my research, I attempted sometimes unsuccessfully to get in touch with busy musicians in St. John's by email. It is unclear in these instances if the messages went astray or if the person was uninterested.

Outside of St. John's, amongst the older dance fiddler generation there was a desire both to discuss and trade tunes; however in the majority of my urban interviews the instruments were left in their cases and we talked the entire time. I attribute this to personal taste of the musician but also the means of welcoming a visiting musician. In smaller communities, where there are not many traditional musicians, it was a treat to

meet a new musician with whom to share tunes and to learn new ones. Often, I had the sense that the chance to talk about music with an interested person was welcomed. In some of these cases, my versions of tunes were seen as being correct because it was assumed I had learnt them from an authoritative source such as a music book, recording or prominent musician. In one case, John Drover of Whitbourne wished for me to commit his *entire* repertoire to memory before I left (2001, 2002). It was very informative to hear Drover's commentary regarding what was musically important to him.

For professional musicians, most of whom lived in St. John's, the emphasis on playing and sharing tunes was not as strong as it was in the outports. These musicians were more interested in conveying their own thoughts and ideas about music and used their instrument to demonstrate. I suggest there are a number of reasons for this tendency. These musicians were more likely to have gone to university, particularly in folklore, and assumed I was seeking ideas rather than tunes, which were available on their recordings. It is also possible that they did not see themselves as tradition bearers in the same way as they might have considered the older dance musicians from whom both they and I wished to collect "dying" tunes. I had also played with many of them in the past and would have the opportunity to do so again, so there was no rush to play tunes during an interview. These interviews often ended with the agreement to play together at another time in the future. Over the course of my ten years of cumulative research I have moved from interviewing the local dance musician to professional traditional musicians in the wider public eye.

As my work progressed the nature of my questions changed. During my masters work I was seeking to collect old dance tunes and reconstruct oral history surrounding the music of the dance tradition in a given region. I did not discourage tunes learned from media, but I did actively encourage the memory retrieval of local dance tunes which may have fallen out of a musician's active repertoire. I also concentrated on asking musicians about technique and their thoughts about Newfoundland musical style. Sometimes the questions extended into a comparison between Newfoundland and Irish music and sometimes not. For my PhD work, I moved towards asking about interviewees' current experiences as Newfoundland musicians and their perceptions of how Newfoundland music has changed in the past few decades. I also asked how they compared Newfoundland and Irish music. This line of questioning began by trying to elicit responses about "Celtic" music, a term that did not resonate with many musicians. I found that these musicians were far more interested in regionalizing and localizing music than whitewashing it with a transnational term. I then tried to re-position the question by asking about specific Irish musicians who have had an influence in Newfoundland which led to examining the McNulty Family, Ryan's Fancy and Séamus Creagh for this dissertation.

### ***1.6 Archival Work***

The McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy research was a type of work I had rarely undertaken and involved extensive newspaper, archival, and discography research. Dr. Pat Byrne was kind enough to allow me access to an interview he conducted with Eileen McNulty-Grogan when she returned to Newfoundland in 1975. There are no other

surviving in-depth interviews with a member of the group so this allowed me access to many of Eileen's stories and opinions which would otherwise be inaccessible. I also did archival research for the McNultys and Ryan's Fancy in the Archives of Irish America (AIA), Memorial University's Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA), in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS) and in Memorial's special collections in which I examined the Devine papers. I viewed Ryan's Fancy television shows whenever it was possible at Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) or at MUNFLA.

At the Archives of Irish America (AIA) at New York University, I was able to examine the McNulty Family papers in detail which included newspaper columns and reviews, concert programs, musical scores, photographs and vaudeville theatrical scripts. While in Dublin in 2007, I also visited the Irish Traditional Music Archives (ITMA), however none of the material I consulted there has been referenced in this work.

## ***1.7 Chapter Outlines***

### ***1.7.1 Chapter Two: Theoretical Concepts: Electronic Mass Media and the Construction of Musical Senses of Place in Traditional Newfoundland Instrumental Music***

Chapter Two situates my study in relation to the theoretical issues of electronic mass media and place as related to fiddle music. I examine the research which has been conducted on fiddle music in North American, Ireland and Scotland. This dissertation focuses on a local tradition which selectively utilizes the transnational style of Irish music. Style is a word which is used extensively in discussions of fiddle music to compare and contrast regions, repertoire and players; however a clear definition of style

is hard to determine. One usually equates style with location and as a sub-set of regional style a players' repertoire choices, ornamentation and other technical musical elements. A part of my discussion takes into consideration how the literature approaches the concept of style in relation to mass media and place. I also consider the terms "musical senses of place" and "sense of musical place" and explore their different implications in relation to the wider literature on place and music.

***1.7.2 Chapter Three: Britain's Oldest Colony and Canada's Newest Province: Perspectives on Newfoundland History and the History of the Irish in Newfoundland***

Newfoundland's history of settlement and colonization varies quite dramatically from the histories of other areas of North America. Used as a fishing outpost by several countries including England, France and Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, an organized system of civil government was not put in place until the 19<sup>th</sup> century before which the British navy presided over the island (Cadigan 2009, 45-153). Newfoundland and Labrador has historic ties to Ireland, Scotland, England and France. Newfoundland was an English colony but it has recently started portraying itself as predominantly Irish similar to the shift in Nova Scotia towards Scottish "tartanism" as outlined by historian McKay (1994, 206-212). Today, many institutional and governmental initiatives are seeking to link Newfoundland and Ireland usually citing the pre-famine immigration of Irish to Newfoundland and their important role in the fishing industry. This chapter outlines the history of the Irish in Newfoundland.

Through this historical discussion I seek to discover the changing discourse of Newfoundland national and political identities and how they have shifted through time by



looking at narratives of nationhood and ancestry. I examine a cross-section of identity narratives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century spanning colonial government through independence to Confederation with Canada and beyond. As one chapter within a larger dissertation, this examination will, by necessity, be cursory but it provides a foundation for later discussions.

#### ***1.7.3 Chapter Four: The Role of Mass Media and Revivals in Newfoundland and Irish music***

This chapter examines Newfoundland music scholarship and the role of mass media in the development of Newfoundland music as a listening music for stage and recordings. The chapter is conceived in four parts. First it presents the availability of various musics in Newfoundland during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, this chapter examines the scholarship surrounding Newfoundland music. Third, the chapter examines the early electronic media (radio, television and recordings) in Newfoundland and their interactions with traditional music. Finally as the case studies in this dissertation are selected from each of the international Irish revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries so I briefly address each of these revivals as background information.

#### ***1.7.4 Chapter Five: The Musical Routes of the McNulty Family: Ireland, New York, Newfoundland***

The middle of the twentieth century was a period of great change in Newfoundland and Labrador, when the island went from commission of government to becoming a province of Canada. During this time period, the McNulty Family Band, an Irish-American group, was very popular in Newfoundland through the Big 6 sponsored

radio shows (1944-1974). In 1953, businessman J. M. Devine brought the McNulty Family to Newfoundland for a two-month tour. This chapter examines the influence of the McNulty recordings and the use of place in the advertisements and concert reviews during their tour.

***1.7.5 Chapter Six: Folklore Television: The Ryan's Fancy Show Promoting Local Newfoundland Culture***

In the early 1970s, a group of three young Irish musicians formed the band Ryan's Fancy and moved to Newfoundland. Through their experiences in the province they took an interest in the music of Newfoundland and balanced their repertoire between transnational (Irish, Scottish, English) and local pieces. Ryan's Fancy became known internationally through recordings and television. In 1974, Ryan's Fancy began a local television show with the help of documentary film maker and producer Jack Kellum. Together they travelled throughout Newfoundland and the Maritimes producing documentary-style television centred on local tradition bearers. This chapter relates the development of Ryan's Fancy and examines the methods they used to promote local Newfoundland music.

***1.7.6 Chapter 7: Crossing Over: Island to Island CD Project and Recent Connections to Ireland***

In 2003, Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh and folklorist Marie-Annick Desplanques produced a collaborative CD between Newfoundland and Irish musicians titled *Island to Island: Traditional Music of Newfoundland and Ireland*. This chapter examines the

process and repertoire selection of this CD project and the general increasing personal musical connections between Newfoundland and Ireland as they have developed since the late 1980s when Séamus Creagh moved to St. John's, NL. Séamus Creagh and Irish flutist Rob Murphy, both Irish musicians who lived in Newfoundland in the 1980s and early 1990s, were a major influence on a generation of musicians. These young local musicians had come to know Irish music through the recording industry, but it was their contact with Creagh which solidified their connection. Many musicians of this generation have since travelled and lived in Ireland for periods of time, partly due to the feeling of connection to the place culturally and musically.

**Chapter Two:**  
***Theoretical Concepts:***  
***Electronic Mass Media and the Construction of Musical Senses of Place***  
***in Traditional Newfoundland Instrumental Music***

***2.1 Introduction***

In surveying the relevant literature for this dissertation I selected two primary themes: place and media. My research revealed that the mass media was a major factor in the construction of “Irishness” in late 20<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland music. Considering the rhetoric surrounding historical links between Newfoundland and Ireland, particularly since the 1990s, there were other themes I could have chosen.<sup>22</sup> For example, themes such as homeland or diasporic studies could have been relevant to this area of study. I believe there is a great deal of room and material for explorations of these theories in relation to Newfoundland culture in the future.<sup>23</sup> Several Irish scholars are currently examining Newfoundland as part of the Irish musical diaspora (Motherway 2009, 2011; O’Connell 2007; Ó’hAllmhuráin 2008). Rather than seeing Newfoundland as a repository of Irish music, I recognize the contribution of the historical Irish repertoire on the island, but I start from the assumption that Newfoundland music is its own valid entity (with roots throughout the British Isles, Ireland, France, United States and Canada),

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<sup>22</sup> In 1996, the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government of Ireland to pursue cultural and economic collaborations. This MOU was facilitated by the recognition of historical ties between southwest Ireland and Newfoundland. This history and the MOU will be discussed in more detail in Chapters Three, section 3.4.5 and Chapter Seven, section 7.1.1.

<sup>23</sup> Labour out-migration is a staple part of Newfoundland’s history and folklorist Cory Thorne has worked on Newfoundland diaspora in North America (2004).

and examine the contribution of electronic mass media as part of the modern experience of Newfoundland music.

Influence from mass media sources and their interactions with musical senses of place are central to the understanding of fiddle and other instrumental literature but there is an inherent tension between them. Older definitions of place emphasize regionalism and a search for ancestral musical identity. In these cases, place is linked to style characteristics, which mark a geographical fiddle style as unique and further legitimize the style by connecting it historically through immigration patterns to a well-established Western European tradition. Newer approaches to place, however, emphasize “place-making,” paying attention to the way artists selectively use sound and image to evoke locales and imply the meanings of those locales.

Mass or electronic media, on the other hand, are not spatially rooted as they are intended to reach an audience beyond the sphere of face-to-face contact. Some scholars have lamented the fact that fiddlers, and other instrumentalists, learn from many sources (for examples please refer to Bayard 1982, 1-2; Zenger 1980, 6). These scholars see radio and recordings as polluting factors in a supposedly pure tradition perhaps due to the “schizophonic”<sup>24</sup> nature of recorded music which separates it from its original context or place (MMaP 2012, np).<sup>25</sup> Greene acknowledged this tendency in his statement that, “Ethnomusicologists and ethnographers who study world musical cultures have until recently tended to ignore electricity-based technologies in their studies of music making,

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<sup>24</sup> “Schizophonia” was coined as a term by Canadian composer Murray Schafer in his 1969 book *The New Soundscape* (43-47) and further discussed in his 1977 *Tuning of the World* (90). The term “refers to the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction” (1977, 90).

<sup>25</sup> Unless a page number is given for a website, no page (np) is listed in the in-text citation. The specific web page address can be found in the bibliography.

community building, and performativity” (2005a, 4). Greene and Porcello’s volume *Wired for Sound* rectifies this situation substantially by dealing directly with musicians’ interactions with technology (2005). Scholars have now accepted that learning from electronic media is inevitable and in many cases the only way to learn when an aural and personal transmission line is broken. By examining the impact and interaction between three groups of Irish and Newfoundland musicians my work deepens the understanding of the two-way interactive nature of mass media and traditional music. The next section will discuss just what is meant by the terms “traditional,” and “traditional music” as discussed within the scope of this dissertation.

## ***2.2 Problematizing Traditional Musics***

The concept of “traditional” is central to the research of many ethnomusicology and folklore scholars. What exactly does this term mean? When is something “traditional” and when is it not? In this short section I briefly survey some of the multiple uses of the term and explain how I will employ it in this dissertation. This will not be an exhaustive examination of the term as that has been problematized very well by many scholars (see Ben-Amos 1984; Bronner 1998, 2000; Glassie 2003; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Phillips 2004, among others). The *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (OED) defines tradition as:

**1a.** a custom, opinion, or belief handed down to posterity esp. orally or by practice. **b.** this process of handing down. **2.**...An established practice or custom...**3.** artistic, literary, etc., principles based on experience and practice.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, s.v. “Tradition.”

In his discussion of “traditional” in relation to “folklore,” “culture,” and “history,” folklorist Henry Glassie states that, “tradition is a temporal concept, inherently tangled with the past, the future, with history” (2003, 180-181). It is easy to see how tradition is linked to the past if one of its criteria is longevity; however the link to the future is interesting. Thinking of the future tradition not only focuses on continuity but also on change and how the practices of a tradition will develop overtime. Ben-Amos’ definition of folklore as occurring in “small-groups” is congruent with oral face-to-face idea of transmission of tradition (1972, 13). In fact, even when “traditional” musics move into the recording studio, very often the musicians wish to retain the small group interaction as a way of keeping the “authenticity” of the music (see Chapter Seven). In his 1984 article, “The Seven Strands of *Tradition*: Varieties in its Meaning in American Folklore Studies” Ben-Amos gives a thorough survey of the history of the term and discusses the multiplicities and malleability of “tradition.” Similarly *Questions of Tradition* manages to show how tradition is used over a variety of disciplines including art, politics and law (Phillips and Schochet 2004). Clifford discuss how tradition need not be viewed as the antithesis of modernity but instead can be seen as “a newly complex, open-ended subject” which is in favour of, rather than opposed to, a “dynamic future” (2004, 152).

Given these complexities, it is important to consider *who* is defining the concept of tradition, for what purpose, and in what time period. What are the definitions of traditional and/or folk music? Do musicians and/or academics make a distinction between traditional music and folk music? It would seem that in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century “folk” music was the preferred term, and this switched to “traditional” music in the latter half of the century. In the definitions below the two terms are used somewhat interchangeably.

In 1953, after some debate, the International Folk Music Council (IFMC)<sup>27</sup> defined folk music as:

Folk music is music that has been submitted to the process of oral transmission. It is the product of evolution and is dependent on the circumstances of continuity, variation and selection. (quoted in Karpeles 1955, 6)

The next year, in 1954, at its conference the Council expanded the definition extensively to read:

Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are (i) continuity which links the recent with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives.

The terms can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular and art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the re-fashioning and recreation of the music by the community that gives it its folk character. (Almeida 1955, 23)

It is this sort of definition which is used to deem the repertoires of musicians who learn from electronic media, as inauthentic. This 1954 definition suggests that popular music and folk music may not live side-by-side in the same community or within the same musician.

In 1955, Karpeles wrote a discussion paper stating that she found the definition weak because it did not consider the element of time as part of the process of a song

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<sup>27</sup> The name has since changed to the International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM).



becoming traditional. Karpeles uses an example which is quite pertinent to the discussion of radio play in this dissertation. She points out that:

The time factor must play a part in evolution. A song that is learned orally, say from the radio, does not immediately and automatically become a folk song, no matter how great is its popularity...In communities in which there is a strong folk music tradition a composed song which hits the popular imagination will very quickly be absorbed into the tradition, but where the existing tradition is declining the process of transformation will take longer, if indeed it happens at all. (1955, 7)

Karpeles adequately describes the process by which much of the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy radio and recording repertoire entered the Newfoundland song and instrumental repertoire.

Twenty-one years later in 1976 the IFMC produced a paper which carefully re-examined the 1954 definition and shifted emphasis to human behaviour surrounding music rather than a distinct and definable category. Elbourne concluded that:

It is the active transmission of traditional music which is the criterion of its traditionality, not simply its identity through time. Traditional music is behavior. Any kind of music, no matter what its origin or content, can become part of a tradition and be transmitted traditionally.

It must be emphasized that this is not an attempt to outline the characteristics of a distinct category of music called "traditional music." Traditionality should be seen, rather, as an emphasis within a wide range of musical activities. Existing definitions of "folk music" founder in making classifications that are too narrowly based on content and form. The suggestion is that the concept of traditionality in music proves more fruitful when applied to actual societies than that of "folk music." (Elbourne 1975, 26)

I find this definition useful in many respects but feel that "transmitted traditionally" is somewhat vague. Does it include learning from radio, television or recordings or only music which is learned in a face-to-face context? Another discussion paper which sought to define folk and traditional music appeared in the *Canadian Journal for Traditional*

*Music* in 1988. This article presented a range of diverse opinions in order to show the difficulty of capturing such an encompassing term (Spalding et al. 1988, 1). In attempting to accommodate many possible viewpoints, Spalding selected twelve categories under the rubric of folk music (ibid., 2-4). As a definition of “traditional music” or “folk music” is difficult at best, he was criticized for both his specificity and his breadth of definition (ibid., 4-7). However, parts of the article are useful in that Spalding gives importance to the intention of the performer. In this way he considers music to be “traditional” or “folk” based on the musicians’ perception of the repertoire as traditional, regardless of their new presentations of it in modern contexts (ibid., 2-4). This applies to my work as I am specifically examining traditional and “near-traditional” musics which have been transmitted through electronic media and adopted as “traditional” in a new place and context.

In the earlier definitions discussed above, the pedigree of a piece of music was called into question as it limited which pieces of music could be considered traditional or folk. It is surprising that none of these definitions consider place as a part of traditional/folk music but leave it to be assumed. One cannot speak of a single global traditional music, it must be linked to a region and/or ethnicity of people. I like Elbourne’s idea of musical behaviour (1975, 26), since despite the history or credentials of a piece, traditional music helps to connect a person to a particular place and the continuity of that place. As discussed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 traditional music is connected to a place or series of places, the people, and community of that place; even in solo traditions it is a collective rather than a solitary experience. My working definition for traditional music takes these definitions into account but relies primarily on how

musicians identify themselves and their music. For the most part, musicians I have worked with consider traditional music to include music that was, at one time, handed down aurally in a community context, even if they did not personally learn it in that manner. The musicians I consulted with also tend to distinguish pieces they know to be composed, particularly by tradition-bearers, simply by acknowledging their origins. Many of the musicians I spoke with embrace the application of new creativity, for example adding modern instrumentation, to older pieces as consistent with “tradition.” This adaptation helps link the music both to the past and into the future.

### ***2.3 Identity in Relation to Senses of Place***

Identity and senses of place are concepts which can either be seen as differentiated or closely linked. The word “identity” is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as stemming from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Latin word *identitas* meaning to be the same or identical.<sup>28</sup> Another variant of this is that identity refers to “the characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is” such as “he wanted to develop a more distinctive Scottish Tory identity.”<sup>29</sup> Thus identity is used to categorize and associate a person with a set of values or habits which sometimes can be nationalist, political, or ethnic in character. Someone could also identify with a particular gender, occupation or lifestyle choice such as a dietary option, sports team, or intellectual group. In general, while people have multiple identities for different parts of their lives, what I

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<sup>28</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “Identity.” accessed December 8, 2012, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/identity>

<sup>29</sup> (ibid.)

will consider here is ethnic, or national, identity. Abrahams examined “identity” as a core term of expressive culture and points out that it can be problematic: “*Identity* invokes a conception of individual and social life that has become ubiquitous but that causes more confusion and confrontation than it designates meaningful social states of being” (2003, 198). He also points out that when discussing identity, “difference” and power relations are inherently part of the conversation; when someone identifies as part of a particular group he or she then also identifies as *not* being a part of another group. Abrahams states that:

Distinctions are made, for social and political purposes, on geographical, linguistic and lifestyle perceptions, sometimes by the group so identified and sometimes by those in power about others who are within their ambit or at its borders. It is difficult to discuss identity without invoking deep stereotyping of those designated as stranger or enemy. One way or the other issues of power, segregation, and often subjugation become an outcome of such discussions. (ibid., 199)

It is useful to think about “senses of place” as a less bounded and loaded concept than identity. “Senses of place” avoids some of the power politics of identity, particularly national or ethnic identity. It can be linked to identity as in geographer Jackson’s definition of place as a “permanent position in both the social and topographical sense, that gives us our identity” (1984, 152). Senses of place can also provide a link between the lived experience of a place and the sense of community created there which is not experienced outside of that space. Cultural geographer Ryden claims that “a sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines” (1993, 38). The National Trust for Historic Preservation gives a much more inclusive definition. It states that a sense of place encompasses all “those things that add up to a

feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else” (S. Stokes et al. 1997, 192).<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, in Newfoundland, Irishness is used in a dual manner. It is used both to create the feeling that Newfoundland is unique from other parts of North America and at the same time that it is connected to a respected international tradition. I believe this is true, not only due to the sense of historical connection as discussed in Chapter Three, but also because of the environmental and physical similarities of North Atlantic geography between the two islands. These elements serve to strengthen the sense of comparative place in both physical and cultural milieux. In this work, I will use the word identity sparingly and only in reference to national or political identities. The next section is an in-depth examination of constructions of place, senses of place and musical senses of place.

#### ***2.4 The Construction of Place and Musical Senses of Place***

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 while listening to CBC radio, I experienced a profound musical sense of place. I was living in Ottawa at the time and that day the radio played button accordion music very reminiscent of Newfoundland music. The sound of the button accordion made me homesick and I wished I could move home to Newfoundland permanently. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Newfoundland’s Confederation with Canada and I was pleased the CBC was giving the newest province so much attention. I soon discovered the program had nothing to do with Newfoundland; instead CBC was

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<sup>30</sup> I must credit Nathaniel James with collecting together these previous three definitions in his thesis (2001, np).

celebrating the creation of the new northern territory of Nunavut. I was floored, and could not shake the sense they were playing Newfoundland music.<sup>31</sup> The sound of the button accordion was a stronger association to my sense of Newfoundland musical sense of place than if had they played Irish fiddle music. To me, Irish music lives in multiple places, only one of which is Newfoundland; but the button accordion *belongs to* my home province.<sup>32</sup>

Newfoundlanders are characterized as possessing a fierce sense of place (Blackmore 2003, 341). The politicians fight dramatically for the province and the ex-pats regularly lament living “away” (ibid. 354-355).<sup>33</sup> With a strong history of out-migration, one joke sums up the strong ties Newfoundlanders hold with their province:

Q: How can you recognize Newfoundlanders in Heaven?

A: The Newfoundlanders want to go home!<sup>34</sup>

In other words, despite the good material life found through work elsewhere in the country, there is a perception that Newfoundlanders have a persistent underlying longing to “go home.” The theme of “missing home” is prevalent in Newfoundland songs. For example it is a strong theme in the late 1960s repertoire of ex-pat Newfoundland

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<sup>31</sup> The use of the button accordion and its northern style would make a very interesting study. Jim Hiscott did a study on accordion players in the Eastern Canadian Arctic and also agreed that they some of their material was “reminiscent of Newfoundland, and possibly, Quebec styles” and many of the Inuit players learned from records of Newfoundland accordionist Harry Hibbs (2000, 17).

<sup>32</sup> Of course the button accordion or melodeon is used throughout the world including Ireland, Australia, Quebec, and in Cajun music (Best 2006; S. Johnson 2012; Ornstein 1982; G. Smith 1997).

<sup>33</sup> When I moved “home” in 2004 and re-met a visiting British musical colleague, she asked me about my life. I simply said I’d been living “away” for ten years. She was amused, and stated that only in Newfoundland does it not matter *where* you’ve been - the whole world is simply “away” and only Newfoundland is “home.”

<sup>34</sup> This is part of a group of jokes which show Newfoundlanders in a good light that my family and circle of friends tend to tell. Not all Newfoundlanders who move away want to move back, but many do.

accordionist Harry Hibbs (1942-1989).<sup>35</sup> Other jokes which suggest that all Newfoundlanders know each other, point to the idea of Newfoundland as an imagined community. In fact, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, whether or not Newfoundlanders are acquainted with each other, they have a shared sense of Newfoundlander-ness.<sup>36</sup>

Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* defines a nation as “an imagined community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (2006, 6). He continues by explaining that a nation is “limited and sovereign” due to the recognition of other nations outside well-defined borders (ibid., 7). These other nations help construct a country as unique and circumscribed. Even if a place is not an official political nation, it can still be an “imagined community” if there is a “deep horizontal comradeship” based on location (ibid.). As is shown in the Chapter Three, Newfoundland has held several official national political identities. I argue that Newfoundland has often been defined politically or culturally, in relation to other places, be that place England, Canada, the United States, or Ireland. It has been a British colony, an independent nation, now a province of Canada and as previously noted, it has more recently been labelled as “the most Irish place in the world outside of Ireland” (McGinn 2000, 8). Categorizing Newfoundland in relation to other places is also present in music. Folksong collector Maud Karpeles is an illustration of this point. While McGinn and Coogan see Newfoundland as Irish in character in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the early 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Please see the Encyclopaedia of Music in Canada Online for more biographical information on Hibbs (2012).

<sup>36</sup> I would suggest that Labradorians have a different sense of place than Newfoundlanders. I am not attempting to speak on their behalf.

century Karpeles saw Newfoundland as an English colony populated with people of British background (Carpenter 1980, 115-116; Lovelace 2004, 286). She came to Newfoundland as she expected it to be a simple repository of British folksong rather than a tradition with multiple types of music only one of which was Child ballads.

In his work on material culture in Calvert, folklorist Gerald Pocius makes an important point about Newfoundlanders' sense of place. He discusses the large scale disruption of place during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century due to the government-sponsored resettlement program. Between 1954 and 1972, twenty-seven thousand residents of the new province were "voluntarily" resettled from isolated communities to larger communities (Pocius 2000, 20-21).<sup>37</sup> This program was designed to modernize and Canadian-ize Newfoundlanders. Because so many people lived on remote islands and in coves which were either impossible or impractical to connect to roads, the resettlement program was designed to bring these people into "growth centres" where they could avail of social services, such as health and education, promised in Confederation with Canada. Pocius states:

Disrupting the ties of place gradually had a major impact on cultural perceptions, for communities and the way of life that remained soon became traditionalized – like pre-Confederation life – as *the* genuine Newfoundland culture....Like pre-Confederation times, life before resettlement was filled with daily connections with common places, which were no longer experienced after resettlement in strange and modern towns. Newfoundland music, painting, and literature all increasingly focused on the theme of resettlement – what was essentially a disruption of place – as leading artists pointed to this particular government program as a destroyer of culture. Not surprisingly, then, many of those at the forefront of a Newfoundland cultural revival, although they may have willingly left their home communities, later became disturbed by their resettlement and by

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<sup>37</sup> I put quotations around "voluntarily" as that was the official government position. However, in practice, there was significant social pressure on residents who did not want to move because the other members of the community would not receive compensation packages unless *everyone* moved.



the program generally. These cultural critics now have no home to go back to, no real place where they belong. (ibid., 21)

As Pocius acknowledges, resettlement was not only a distribution of physical place but an upheaval of habitual, cultural and familial place and one that came soon after a loss of sovereignty for Newfoundland politically. With the combination of the Commission of Government, Confederation and resettlement all within a generation, Newfoundlanders felt a loss of place, in which many of them literally had no family home to which to return.<sup>38</sup> Subsequently a vision of an idealized rural Newfoundland became a potent idea in the 1970s, particularly among the cultural elite. This ideal rejected both Britain's imperialism and Canada's modernity, and instead sought a simpler, rural lifestyle filled with hard work and expressive culture. As is shown throughout this dissertation, Irish music was often associated with rural, simple, hard-working values. This image was projected by a number of Irish performers including the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy during a period when Newfoundland was seeking a new sense of place due to the upheavals of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The idea of Newfoundland music, particularly instrumental music, being indebted to Ireland is strong and many musicians (over)state that, while we have put our own flavour on the music, all the tunes are essentially Irish to start with. Others argue that Irish music is an import and should be ignored in favour of truly unique Newfoundland music from the outport dance tradition. Folksinger Anita Best was expressing this latter view when she described Irish music as "rampant cultural imperialism" (quoted in T.

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<sup>38</sup> As is discussed in Chapter Three section 3.5, a Royal Commission on *Renewing and Strengthening our Place within Canada* confirms this sense of loss (V. L. Young et al. 2003, vi).

MacDonald 1999, 190). This dissertation nuances these approaches by acknowledging the contributions of Irish musicians in Newfoundland and shows how Newfoundland musicians have negotiated their influence.

It may seem obvious that music and place are connected, particularly in relation to traditional musics which gain their legitimacy from the location and ancestral peoples through which they are defined. As argued in section 4.4.5 in relation to “Celtic” music, attempts to divorce traditional musics from place often result in a backlash from musicians who no longer feel “Celtic” is a legitimate or meaningful musical category. Music courses, CDs, and books reinforce our sense that music is tied to place with broad categories such as Irish music or African music. Those in the know break these categories down into more specific locations such as countries within Africa and then to regions within countries and further still to the musics of particular peoples or villages.<sup>39</sup> In the case of Irish music, you can examine regional music within Ireland from *Sliabh Luchra*, Galway or East Clare and then further afield to where that music travelled throughout the diaspora to New York, Boston, Newfoundland, or Australia. There are subtleties to discover such as the interaction between musics, the localized meanings infused in music and where music is learned. Beyond this locational emphasis, there are emotions and identifications people make with musics connected to their experiences in a certain place. These ideas stretch to the social spheres and meanings of music.

Margaret Rodman writes that up until the 1990s, place was often conceived of as “unproblematic” by anthropologists because place was simply a locality rather than a

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<sup>39</sup> One hopes that good teachers and scholars would also organize cross-cultural topics according to issues rather than simply geographical place.

complex social concept and construction (1992, 640-641). Rodman combines “multilocality” with “multivocality” in order to show that people studied by anthropologists and other social scientists are not simply living in the prescribed physical boundaries of their locale, but they are also constructing their senses of place through their relations with other places. She states that:

It is time to recognize that places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experienced places are forged of culture and history. (ibid., 643)

Particularly relevant to this study is Rodman’s statement, “that regional relations between *lived spaces* [her emphasis] are developed through infusing experience in one place with the *evocation* [my emphasis] of other events and other places” (ibid., 644). Following this line of thought, the “Irishness” evoked in Newfoundland is not necessarily based on the actual lived experiences in Ireland but on an “imagined” notion of “Irishness” as experienced in Newfoundland. Patrick O’Flaherty expresses this in his article, “Caught in the Nets: Growing Up Irish Catholic in Newfoundland,” stating that by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the surviving Irish immigrant culture was a “sentimental paddyism, as much shaped by New York ethnic posturing and the singing of the McNulty Family on the radio as by any authentic influence from across the Atlantic” (1986, 6). He continued that, despite singing Irish songs about Irish history, as an Irish-Newfoundland child he had no idea what the songs meant as “no Irish geography, history or literature was taught” (ibid., 10). O’Flaherty’s musical connection to Ireland was through the emotions evoked in the songs rather than through an experiential knowledge of Ireland, the physical place. I would suggest that the emotions triggered by Irish songs were

ultimately mapped onto Newfoundland to help construct it as an “Irish” place through music. In a similar fashion Stokes explains that clichés of musicians such as large Italian opera singers and others “perform a knowledge of other places” through stereotypes rather than reinforce practical knowledge of a location or people (1994, 4). MacDonald has suggested that in relation to Ireland, Newfoundland has succumbed to the “heritage” vs. “history” syndrome described by cultural geographer David Lowenthal in which “heritage is not gauged by any critical test as history is, but by its current potency” (1999, 188).

In the late 1980s and 1990s the issues of space and place began to be discussed in anthropology and ethnomusicology. Four important volumes from anthropology, which cross over into ethnomusicology, were published in this era. They are: the special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* on “Place and Voice in Anthropological Thought” edited by Appadurai (1988), Martin Stokes’ *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (1994), *The Place of Music* (1998b) and *Senses of Place* (1996b) edited by Andrew Leyshon and Feld & Basso respectively.

In their introduction to *Senses of Place*, Feld and Basso overview some of the cross-disciplinary approaches to place and space. According to them, place used to be conceived in anthropology and geography simply as “dwelling”. That approach shifted in the early 1990s to examining place, as contested space, be that political, military or social (1996a, 3-5). In these essays the editors claim that “people don’t just dwell in comfort or misery, in centers or margins, in place or out of place, empowered or disempowered. People everywhere act on the integrity of their dwelling” by creating definitions of place through their own experiences (ibid., 11). Geographer Linda McDowell maintains the

idea that contested space has led to a “more sophisticated conceptualization of the notion of locality or place itself” in which “places are contested, fluid and uncertain” rather than simply points on a map (McDowell 1999, 3-4; quoted in Tye and Trew 2005, 6). The idea of contested spaces has resulted in much insightful research including a 2005 special edition of the Canadian folklore journal *Ethnologies* entitled “Contested Geographies” (Tye and Trew). This issue examined different types of contested spaces: museums (Trew), governmental structures (Latta), “Celtic” music in Cape Breton (Ivakhiv), material culture in diverse areas including in palliative care units (Brodie), and space as a symbol of homeland for immigrants (Alburo). By examining the construction of “Irishness” within Newfoundland through the mass media I am contesting Newfoundland as an inherently and uncritical Irish place. I am recognizing that Irishness is important to some and unimportant to others. In music, Irish tunes are only one part of the Newfoundland musical repertoire.

In his introduction to the special issue of *Cultural Anthropology*, Arjun Appadurai states that place is equated with the “culturally defined locations to which ethnographers refer” and make up the “landscape of anthropology” (1988, 16). In reference to voice, Appadurai discusses the power relations “involved in representing the voices of others” in our ethnographic writing (ibid., 20). He contends that “anthropology survives by its claim to capture other places (and other voices) through its special brand of ventriloquism” (ibid.). By going *to* a location and describing it through ethnography, the ethnographer must be careful of his or her power as an author penning an authoritative text. Many of the readers will never visit that location to form their own opinions;

therefore the reader may use the ethnographer's text to learn information and how to think about that particular place, people and their customs.

Stokes argues that "music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (1994, 5). Leyshon, Matless and Revill state that their volume "presents space and place not simply as sites where or about which music happens to be made, or over which music has diffused; rather, here different spatialities are suggested as being formative of the sounding and resounding of music" (1998a, 4). I suggest that one such spatiality would be the use of recordings to help create a musician's musical environment. While a recording is not a "place" in and of itself, the playing of the recording affects the environment of the listener and potentially how the listener conceives of the music which contributes to his or her larger musical worldview. They state that "to consider the place of music is not to reduce music to its location, to ground it down into some geographical baseline, but to allow a purchase on the rich aesthetic, cultural, economic and political geographies of musical language" (ibid.). My work shows how music can live in multiple geographies and be reshaped by various aesthetics.

These anthologies offer many different approaches to interpreting place. These approaches range from: the highly localized knowledge needed to understand the Apache myths and metaphors based in specific landmarks and how that is changing with a new generation who relates to the geography differently (Basso 1996, 87-88); to the "acoustemology of place" in rainforest inspired Kaluli music in Papua New Guinea (Feld 1996, 91); and the "detritus of history" in the "boom and bust" mining industry of Western Virginia (Stewart 1996, 136). Stewart suggests that:

the problem for ethnography of such a sense of place is how to track its densely textured poetics through its own tense diacritics of center and margin, local and global, past and present without reducing it to the ‘gist’ of things or to the abstract schemas of distant ‘cause’ and encapsulating ‘explanation.’ (ibid., 137-138)

In this work I am tracing just one of multiple and divergent tracks, that of the interaction between particular Irish musicians and Newfoundland music in both its physically/politically circumscribed and “imagined” community. It is quite difficult, as Stewart suggests, not to reduce a very complex situation down to a “gist” as there certainly are multiple centres and margins in this discussion as well as the “distant cause” of historical Irish immigration cited regularly.

A number of articles, particularly those in the Stokes 1994 anthology, focus on music, place and identity in different parts of the world (see Baily (Afghanistan); S. Cohen (Liverpool, England); Mach (Poland)). Stokes discusses how music takes up acoustic space in order to proclaim identity. Stokes’ example is of Protestant marching brass bands on Orangemen’s Day in Northern Ireland when the music not only stakes out the religious identity of the participants but spreads outside the parade streets, which effectively demands that everyone “either march in time to them, or go away” (1994, 9).

As an opposite approach Stokes also discusses musicians who are “out of place” when they travel (1994c, 98). He points out that:

Musicians often live in conspicuously translocal cultural worlds. They travel; their social skills are those of people capable of addressing varied and heterogeneous groups, and their value in a locality is often perceived to be precisely their ability to transcend the cultural boundaries of that locality. (ibid.)

Thus, musicians themselves are “multilocal” and they make music travel either by touring and/or recording and interacting with a variety of social groups and classes.

However, as we are so conditioned to consider social interactions and music, particularly traditional music, as belonging to a particular locality it makes it difficult to understand music which is out of place. So, as Stokes states, “music out of place, we are too readily inclined to believe is music without meaning” (ibid.).

My approach examines how musical senses of place are constructed through perceived cultural history/heritage, recordings, performances and personal contact with other musicians. In the case of Irish-Newfoundland music Rodman’s idea of “multilocality” works very well in that Newfoundland musical senses of place are constructed through reference to the rural and the urban and the multiple constructions of place which connects Newfoundland to Ireland and Irish-New York, among other places. Musical senses of place are not only tied to the locations in which music is produced but includes the ideas about places which inform a musician’s interaction with a piece of music. An illustration of this point is “Mussels in the Corner.” It has become a particularly popular tune in Newfoundland, almost an unofficial anthem. In Ireland the same tune is known as “Maggie in the Woods.” To some musicians, the fact that “Mussels in the Corner” has an antecedent in Ireland reinforces their idea that Newfoundland music is descended from Irish music; while for other musicians “Mussels in the Corner” should be liberated from “Maggie in the Woods” and claimed as a purely Newfoundland tune.<sup>40</sup>

Musicians experience place in a myriad of ways. In traditional musics, the ancestral origin of a tune, like human ancestral antecedents, is often considered an important element of place and descendent style. Musicians may not know anything

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<sup>40</sup> I give an analysis of this tune in Chapter Five, section 5.11.3.



about the origins of tunes, on the other hand. These concepts of musical senses of place are enhanced through interaction with musicians from the location where a musician lives and performs as well as interactions with musicians from other musically related and unrelated regions. Style and place is considered below after an examination of the role of mass media in the construction of place.

### ***2.5 Electronic Mass Media, Senses of Place and Traditional Musics***

Popular music studies have produced extensive scholarship on media and music. Martin Laba states that popular culture has suffered from a negative image due to its connections to “mass culture, a concept which critics have belaboured since the nineteenth century” (1986, 9). Narváez and Laba defined popular and folk culture as follows:

Popular culture refers, in a restrictive interpretation, to cultural events which are transmitted by technological media and communicated in mass societal contexts. Accordingly, the performance contexts of popular culture are usually characterized by significant spatial and social distances between performers and audiences. In contrast to popular culture, folklore performance is artistic performance which is transmitted and communicated by the sensory media of living, small group encounters. The spatial and social distances between performers and audiences in folklore events is slight or non-existent and there tends to be a high degree of performer-audience interaction. (ibid., 1)

Narváez speaks of a “folklore-popular culture continuum” with “conservatism” and “dynamism” as the extremities; however there are many examples of dynamic change in folklore genres and repetitive themes or methods in mass media work (ibid., 1-2). My work on media tends towards the dynamism end of the scale as it shows how local and mediated repertoires interact. In cases, like the *Island to Island* CD discussed in

Chapter Seven, efforts were made to retain the sense of close audience-performer relations, despite the recorded format. Ryan's Fancy, discussed in Chapter Six, worked in recordings, television and live shows, but made a point of maintaining face-to-face relationships with their audiences who counted them as friends and fellow Newfoundlanders.<sup>41</sup>

One of the issues related to the perceived disjuncture between a live concert and a recorded performance are the ways in which participation and aesthetics intersect in each. In his 2008 book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, Turino outlines a continuum which ranges from "participatory" music through "presentational" and "high fidelity" to "studio arts" (26-27). Turino defines:

*participatory performance* as a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role. (ibid., 26; italics in the original)

For Turino "*presentational performance*"<sup>42</sup> involves "one group of people, the artists" who "prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing" (ibid.). This is the concert performance aesthetic in which each side has a separate role to play. In extreme cases there is the "fourth wall" effect when the artists barely acknowledge the audience at all. In contrast to this is the folklore performance aesthetic in which the stage artists wish to communicate with the

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<sup>41</sup> One of the discussion points made by Rob Burns in his ICTM 2011 paper was that even when folk performers become very popular there is an expectation and an effort made to maintain contact with their audience. An example of this choice is discussed in relation to Ryan's Fancy in Chapter Six. It is in popular music genres where there is an aesthetic of creating physical and social distance between the performer and their audience – thus security and bodyguards are hired to create a metaphorical and real sense of distance (Burns 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Italics throughout this paragraph are in the original.

audience – to a culturally acceptable point. In another category, Turino’s defines “*high fidelity as referring* to the making of recordings that are intended to index or be iconic of live performance” (ibid.). The term “high fidelity” does not always refer to a live recording as Turino allows for studio techniques and the roles of producer and sound engineer. Many music recordings refer back to the participatory tradition in which live performance and audience-artist interaction is the ideal. Turino’s final category, *studio sound art*, is closer to the concept of a “sound sculpture” and is not intended to refer to live performance – it is an art form unto itself (ibid., 27). Turino’s theories will be cited throughout this dissertation particularly in reference to high fidelity recordings.

There are many angles from which a scholar can approach traditional musics and media. A common topic has been the interactions with the music industry including how the local is being adopted into a global style and the label of “world music” (Erlmann 1996; Guilbault 1993; Reiss 2003; Vally 2003). Other scholars have undertaken studio ethnography in which they examine power-laden relationships (of race, class and gender) (Diamond 2005; Meintjes 2005; Neuenfeldt 2005). I touch on some studio ethnography type questions and responses in my case study of *Island to Island*; however, these questions were posed after the project completion.

I also consider the very important role that radio played in the lives of Newfoundlanders. The McNulty Family was primarily heard by Newfoundlanders through the *Big 6* radio shows (ca. 1944-1974) which was succeeded in 1974 by a very

similar radio show called *The Irish-Newfoundland Show* on VOCM.<sup>43</sup> In Newfoundland, early radio was also a social event as people gathered together to hear particular programs. Mouth organist Gerald Quinton (1922-2009) recalled for me how his house became a gathering place in the 1940s for radio programs in Red Cliff, Bonavista Bay (2001). This of course changed as radio sets became more common and people listened privately in their homes. Ethnomusicologist Tim Taylor explains how radio was considered an intimate medium and blurred the lines between the normally separated spheres of public and private life in the western world (2005, 259). Folklorist Martin Lovelace, in his study of call-in shows quotes McLuhan stating that radio is a “cool” technology which only utilizes one sense thus requiring the listener to fill in the other senses for themselves (1986, 19). He goes on to suggest that there is a “phenomenon of listener’s perception of radio as intimate communication directed to themselves and their response with behaviour that is appropriate to real social interaction” (ibid.). Taylor states that radio was promoted as a symbol of modernity. In fact, to illustrate this point, radio owners were often compared to segments of the population who did not tend to have radios and were therefore constructed as pre-modern, such as Native Americans and immigrants (2005, 246-250). The race to be viewed as a modern radio-using human extended to all facets of life including radio weddings and funerals, and lullaby shows for those pesky pre-modern infants (ibid., 257). Radio even occasioned new singing styles. Public singing for the theatre (opera or vaudeville) required volume to project across a concert hall but the sensitive radio equipment could not handle the vibrations of a loud

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<sup>43</sup> *The Irish-Newfoundland Show* still airs on Saturday morning on VOCM almost 40 years later. A more detailed discussion of the beginnings of local Newfoundland music shows on both radio and television can be found in Chapter Four, section 4.4.1.

voice and so quiet “crooning” was developed and it gave the impression of someone singing directly to you (ibid., 260). Creating a musical sense or senses of place is also possible through the radio. As examined by Baily in Afghanistan, the radio was used to construct the idea of a national musical canon (1994). In Newfoundland, journalist and future first premier of Newfoundland Joey Smallwood (1900-1991), who was also known on radio as “The Barrelman,” strived to make “Newfoundland known to Newfoundlanders” through music and stories effectively chosen to represent a national set of expressive cultural forms (Narváez 1986, 47).<sup>44</sup> The combination of powerful social concepts alongside music presented as natural by local hosts made the radio a very effective medium for the construction of place in Newfoundland.

Television quickly became an popular activity that has been described as the world’s greatest hobby with the largest “imagined community” (Fiske and Hartley 1993, xvi). Television as a conveyer of “place” was explored by Adams in his article “Television as Gathering Place” (1992). He examines television in terms of its “social context” through the shared experience of watching television, and as a “center of meaning” connected to the shared “commercial slogans, fashion, attitudes and values” conveyed by the medium (ibid., 118). It would seem that other scholars had examined television and place before ethnographers began to explore the interpretation of place (Please see Dayan and Katz 1985; K. MacDonald 1985; McLuhan and Fiore 1967; Meyrowitz 1985). In their book-length examination of television, John Fiske and John Hartley present studies which show how high-powered careers such as medical doctors

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<sup>44</sup> Philip Hiscock’s dissertation explores Smallwood’s use of folklore during his tenure as the “Barrelman” (1994).

and lawyers were over-represented on television while rural and working class jobs are underrepresented (1993, 8-21).<sup>45</sup> This North American pattern contrasts significantly with the portrayal of rural people and culture in the *Ryan's Fancy Show* studied in Chapter Six. Adams states that, "culture and television are clearly involved in reciprocal relations: television affects culture, but culture also affects television in regard to interpretative strategies and social attitudes toward viewing" (1992, 119). As will be seen in Chapter Six, documentary fieldwork in the *Ryan's Fancy Show* both went against the grain of the mainstream media and supported the folk revival values through airing folklore style interviews. Of particular importance in this area are Dayan and Katz's ideas of primary and secondary audiences which identify differently with television audiences either as insiders or outsiders (1985, 61). Dayan and Katz examine large televised ceremonial events such as royal weddings or the Olympics but their perspective can be relevant to *Ryan's Fancy* as well. For Dayan and Katz the primary audiences are local within the country and the televised event serves to reinforce "society's central values" (ibid.). They state that the "spectacle offered is both that of the uniqueness of a given society and that of its conformity with shared standards or ideals" (ibid.). Secondary audiences are international and serve as "witnesses" of these presentations of cultural values who internalize what they see as being essential ingredients of a presenting society's identity (ibid.). Thus when the state-sanctioned CBC aired the *Ryan's Fancy Show* with interviews of rural Newfoundlanders conducted by Irish men it indicated to the secondary audiences in particular that the Irish were not only interested in

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<sup>45</sup> I would think that this has changed in the subsequent decades with shows such as *The Simpsons* or *Roseanne*, however the popularity of medical shows and law based programs is still very high.

Newfoundland culture; but had the authority to decide what aspects to highlight for an authoritative source.

By far the most extensively examined area of music and media is the audio recording, both studio production and consumption. Frith argues that recordings have moved music away from live performances, out of the concert hall, and into the living room where the listener has far more control over the sound than ever before (1996, 226-245). He argues that “liveness” is no longer “essential to musical meaning” (ibid., 229). Frith points out that music is now “mobile” and individually chosen rather than socially constructed. Music now follows us everywhere we go via technology, and recording artists have given up control over the space, or place, and the manner in which their music is heard (ibid., 241). Frith maintains that the “old values” of performance aesthetics are retained but enhanced as perfection is both possible, and expected, on recordings (ibid., 227). I would suggest that, at least the auditory illusion of “liveness,” as explored in Chapter Seven, is still an important value in recordings of Newfoundland music as other scholars have argued in other diverse areas such as South Africa or Austin, Texas (Meintjes 2005, 37-38; Porcello 2005, 104-105). These Newfoundland recordings are often meant to represent, or recreate, the close proximity of a folklore performance. This centrality of “live” sound, of course, depends on the aesthetics of a particular traditional music. In Nepal there is a desire to have “modern” sounds mixed in with the local traditional musics; while in South Africa there are discourses of authenticity and “liveness” that influence the use of technology as well as live performance (Greene 2005b, 199-201; Meintjes 2005, 38-39). Representation of the live show was also an issue for samba schools in Brazil as described by Moehn. In this case the producers

wanted to remove many of the “dirty” sounds associated with the parade and mass choirs to produce a “clean” recording that is up to international standards (Moehn 2005, 64-66, 72).

## ***2.6 Place and Mass Media in Fiddle Literature***

Place and mass media are sometimes juxtaposed as competing forces in fiddle repertoire. Place can be as localized as someone’s kitchen where music is played and learned, or as remote as the homeland of ancestral immigrants who brought their music to the new world with them hundreds of years ago. Very often place is expressed in terms of a style for a given region and group of musicians. As folklorist and fiddler Alan Jabbour has pointed out, American folklorists and collectors have used folklore, not to create a national identity, as in Europe, but to create regional identities to distinguish groups within a large immigrant-based society (1989, 293). Although style can be conceived of purely in musical terms, and completely independent of social considerations, folk music scholarship tends to equate musical styles with geographical locations extending the link to culture, and ancestry.<sup>46</sup> Thus, fiddling styles are inextricably linked to their places of development, which in turn, means that social, economic, historical and geographical factors are all considered to have contributed to that unique form of music and its cultural setting.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For example, the Cape Breton style is grounded in the Scottish heritage of immigrants who came to Canada during the 18<sup>th</sup>-century “golden age” of Scottish fiddling, and the cadences and feel of the music are often equated with the Gaelic language (Cranford 1985, 13).

<sup>47</sup> For example, Feintuch considers Cape Breton fiddling in economic and social terms which affect the musicians who play the music (Feintuch 2004)



Fiddle scholars demonstrate that the linking of tunes and place of origin is complex. In fiddle-based instrumental music many repertoire pieces are found in several different regional styles. Other studies show how media complicates the relationship between locality and style. My earlier research shows that music brought by mass media can, in some cases, also work to support a local style. In the meantime, musics viewed as having a link, either culturally or ancestrally, to a local tradition are welcomed.

Lederman points to stronger media influence in specific regions. She stated in the 1985 special issue of the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* on Canadian fiddling that although there was more research on the eastern areas of the country, Ontario's traditions are, "dominated publicly by the media-disseminated styles, while many older layers of folk music are quietly disappearing with the people who practice them" (1985c, 2). While Lederman's comment might be construed as an assumption of cultural grey-out in the economic centre, it also shows that "media-disseminated styles" are considered to be overpowering to the older styles which are human-based and transmitted primarily small group interaction with elderly people. There have been several other studies which look at fiddle and dance in Ontario and consider the influences of aural traditions and mass media influences (Begin 1985; S. Johnson 2006; Keillor 1985). The same issue of local place versus mass media music is highlighted in the literature surrounding Cape Breton's strong sense of style and place. Cranford has declared that the integration with the local dance tradition has mitigated the effect of radio, recordings and musical literacy so that fiddlers retained their local stylistic elements such as bowing and phrasing even when they learned from outside sources (1985, 13). The stylistic tension between place and

mass media is, then, often formulated in terms of insider and outsider relations or generational differences.

Regionalism is perhaps the first noticeable aspect of most fiddle music studies. Regional fiddle style studies in North America have, as with folk song, concentrated on rural areas. These areas are perceived to still “hold” strong cultural traditions, places isolated enough from the ravages of twentieth-century technology to continue the folk ideals of oral preservation. For example, Burman-Hall selected the southern states because the region was perceived as more conservative, less sophisticated and more “agrarian” area than the north which had diversified and become urbanized (1984, 150-151). These types of regions are viewed as being culturally homogenous and the assumption is that they have retained their ancestral musics and connections to their European roots. This is the dominant ideology in Canadian studies, whereas American scholars tend to examine the old world connections and expect that they have been transformed into a new style.

Proctor describes fiddle music as one of the “most telling and most interesting barometers of Canadian regionalism” (1985, 226). Regions are often defined by a combination of their cultural and geographical boundaries. Quebec has the advantage of being bounded by both political and linguistic borders. The Ottawa Valley, although its boundaries are less geographically well defined, is recognized as a cultural region due to its homogeneity of Irish immigrants who arrived during and after the mid-19th-century potato famine. Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton and Newfoundland are easily defined through their island geography. Other regions such as Kentucky, Pennsylvania and the southern States are seen as having an “ethnically” musically dominant group which

defines their fiddle styles. Zenger states in her dissertation on North American styles, that one of her criteria was to determine if the music had “regional or ethnic significance” (1980, 6). She rejected some regions on the basis that they had “no unique style of their own but chose to play in one [or more] of the [other] styles described” (ibid.). Bayard has already been noted for his dismay at the influence of recordings on style (1982, 1). Based on these criteria scholars have examined fiddle styles in terms of regions they felt should have a unique style and were not urbanized or unduly media influenced.

Several scholars have called attention to the differences between individual and regional styles such as Don Messer’s style in Canada and the Texas style in the United States (Goertzen 1996; Rosenberg 1994b). There is a sense amongst some musicians and scholars that there is a need to support and foster localized music in the face of media-supported styles like Don Messer or Texas fiddling. It is felt that if local styles are to survive they need to compete in the marketplace, particularly after the international revival of the 1990s. One example of a regional style which has thrived in the international marketplace is the Cape Breton style. The Cape Breton fiddle style went from being endangered in the 1970s, as illustrated by the CBC documentary *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*<sup>48</sup> (MacInnis 1972; Thompson 2006) to international stardom during the 1990s with fiddle players, such as Ashley MacIsaac, acting like rock stars. Feintuch explains that in the past 20 years fiddlers in Cape Breton have taken pride in their place by switching from referring to themselves as Scottish violinists to Cape Breton fiddlers (2004, 79-82).<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Films and broadcasts will be listed in the Bibliography and Appendix Ten under the director’s name.

<sup>49</sup> For more detailed description of the Cape Breton music scene please see (Feintuch 2000, 2006).

In some studies, a fiddler is categorized not by the style he or she plays but primarily by where he physically lives. In this way, not only does the style have a location but so does the musician. Such is the case with the Hogan and Hogan study of 800 Canadian fiddle recordings set up the music by location instead of style. They found that many tunes are interchangeable between regions due to the high level of interaction between Canadian “fiddle cultures” (1977, 73-74). Proctor has suggested that style is inherently linked to place as the “subtleties of style” do not travel as well as tunes do. He adds that, despite the homogenizing influence of radio and recordings on both repertoire and style, “distinct regional differences” do exist (1985, 235-236).<sup>50</sup>

Several large comparative studies of fiddle styles exist including the aforementioned studies by Zenger, Proctor, and Hogan. Spielman took a slightly different approach from those who focused on geographical places and examined historical-ancestral background, dividing Canadian fiddle styles into Scottish, Irish, English and French-Canadian, the latter being the only style he felt was “indigenous” in the country (1975, 440). Quebec gained this distinction by Spielman because he felt Quebec had been culturally autonomous from France long enough that the population was now made up of Canadian-born citizens rather than immigrants (ibid., 439). Spielman predictably equates the Scottish style with Cape Breton and the Irish style with Irish communities within Newfoundland, Ontario and New Brunswick (ibid., 435-437). Interestingly, Spielman takes a very different approach from other scholars in

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<sup>50</sup> In 1985, the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* decided to publish a special issue called “Fiddling in Canada.” This was not a comparative study, it was organized by region and covered many different parts of the country with a range of approaches and detail (Lederman, ed. 1985a)

commenting on the old-time fiddling style as played by Don Messer, saying that it is actually an English style but then also an “amalgamated” style which is “non-commercial” as it is intended for dancers (ibid., 442).

Fiddler Don Messer (1909-1973) is often cited as Canada’s most influential fiddler. Messer was born in New Brunswick and as a young man studied classical violin in Boston. The effects of his classical training can be seen in his violin posture. Rosenberg states that the Boston lessons were “seminal” and gave him the idea of “correct” postures and playing techniques (1994b, 24). Messer saw his new approach as an evolution, part of his transition from rural to urban and folk to classical. Rosenberg recognized that “while he brought his folk fiddling skills to the big city, they were moulded there into something different,” a style that would go on to influence the entire country (ibid.). Messer appeared on radio and television for thirty years from 1942 to 1973 (ibid., 25-26). Lanark County, Ontario fiddler Dawson Girdwood acknowledged the immense impact Don Messer had on players and the general public. Girdwood stated that Messer was so popular that on Friday nights you could hear “Don Messer music all over the town [coming from] cars driving up and down” (quoted in Begin 1985, 7). Some fiddlers and scholars feel that Don Messer’s repertoire worked to suppress local repertoires, although Joanne Trew feels that being able to juggle several different repertoires is a sign of strength amongst Ottawa Valley fiddlers (1996, 342). My own work has shown that Don Messer tunes were often adopted by Newfoundland fiddlers who wished for a challenge or to play privately (Osborne 2007, 196). Contrary to Spielman’s and Rosenberg’s assessment of the style, many Newfoundland players viewed Messer’s repertoire as listening music rather than dancing music. This is also contrary to

how Messer portrayed himself as a dance fiddler who often played for dancers on his television show. I can only surmise that the type of tunes Newfoundland fiddlers learnt from Messer's shows were inappropriate for their local set dance forms.

This literature survey reveals, then, that there has been some tension between scholars who emphasize regional difference and those who acknowledge the impact of media and artists such as Don Messer who became known through the media. Despite the availability of recordings for the better part of a century, mass media inspired repertoire was still seen by some scholars in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as new in contrast to the old oral transmission context. In her discussions of Métis fiddling, Lederman distinguishes between an old and new style based on recordings of fiddlers Andy deJarlis, and Don Messer (1985b, 1991). The older repertoire is music considered to be linked to the idiosyncrasies of place and settlement patterns. One of the often cited hallmarks of fiddlers who learn from recordings is a lack of variation between performances. Fiddler Ivan Hicks states that in New Brunswick there was more variation in the older generation who did not all "hear the same tune the same way" (1985, 17). He observes that fiddlers influenced by Don Messer have less variation than those who learned in the lumber camps (*ibid.*).

Perhaps one reason for the delineation between interpersonal and electronic media learning is the value of individual variation within an acceptable range versus copying each nuance of another fiddler. A fiddler who spoke with Leary illustrated this point in stating his father had advised "never try to copy another person's playing" (1992, 17). He maintained that it was better to "try to develop your own style" (*ibid.*). Developing your own style is the mark of a good performer in many fiddle traditions, but as

Lederman points out, the influence of recordings is reducing this aspect in the younger generations who value precise reproduction (1991, 48). On the other hand, Johnson has found in her work on Ontario fiddle contests that many non-contest fiddlers expressed “an understanding of tradition as static, bounded and essentialist, located in a specific point in the past” therefore “for them contemporary contest fiddling has no meaning” as it encourages innovation (2006, 3). In my personal experience this delineation is not so clear cut. I have found that the younger generations start by imitating exactly from recordings or people but once they have absorbed the parameters and techniques of their chosen tradition they begin performing their own personalized variations and can cite both versions. Thus they both uphold the tradition and innovate within it at the same time.

## ***2.7 Musical Senses of Place: Music, Media and Place***

This chapter has examined the literature surrounding traditional music, electronic mass media and the construction of place. Certainly mass media can present options which lead people to forgo experiencing locally performed live musics. At the same time, electronic media can also help reinforce a musical sense or senses of place, by allowing listeners and musicians to hear their local music regularly, even when live performances are not available. Recordings can help musicians feel part of a larger “imagined community” which have both local and international components. Recordings can also give young musicians an avenue to learn from older local musicians whom they were unable to meet through the community.

As can be gleaned from the above literature review there is no definitive definition of musical senses of place. Scholars now seek to understand place beyond simply geographical location by examining the imagined experiences that make it meaningful by considering how place is contested through cultural expression, and by recognizing the multilocal interpretations of place. My work proposes that the mass media interacts with, and adds to musical senses of place.

What exactly are “musical senses of place”? Are they the same or different from “senses of musical place”? Are these terms experiential or imagined? If they are experiential which physical senses do they encompass? Do these terms focus on the location or the people’s actions in these places? On the surface they may seem interchangeable. Delineating and defining these turns of phrase is a challenge. As discussed above in the literature, senses of place, is a complex weave of many factors. I offer the following definitions.

“Musical senses of place” encompass the socio-cultural impressions of place as evoked through music. It recognizes the power of music to bring to mind a flood of associations. This term is evocative and imaginative.

“Senses of musical place” is a more limited concept. It is experiential and refers to the music itself and its performance in particular locations. It does not deal with wider senses of place, but with musical activities.

Senses of musical place, or places, could be seen as part of a musical sense of place; but musical senses of place is too broad to be encompassed within a sense of musical place.

My definition of “musical senses of place” allows for many of the ideas about place and music discussed in this chapter. As an “imagined” concept musical senses of place incorporates a multitude of fluid and changeable experiences, history and heritage,



emotions and memories evoked by hearing or playing music. It includes Leyshon's "rich aesthetics" (1998a, 4) and Stewart's "densely textured poetics" (1996, 136) which reflect the entire experience of a place and Rodman's "multilocality" (1992) as brought forth through music. Similarly, Lippman recognizes that musical styles are endowed with meaning connected to a wider range of definitions of self and culture (2006, 41). Bohlman has suggested that musical style is based on or produced by "social cohesion" (1988, 4-5).

At the same time, differences of opinion between members of the same musical imagined community about which musics should, or should not, be included in the collective musical sense of place is an important element. As Anderson discusses, a nation is circumscribed not only by what or who is within the country; but also by the regulation of its borders and who is excluded from its social-cultural fabric. Similarly, a musical sense of place could include styles which are accepted by some members of the imagined community and rejected by others. This allows for change and fluidity. Musical senses of place allow for the building of an imagined community through mediated music conveyed through electronic mass media sources. This concept allows for mediated music to travel, yet still refer to, and convey meaning about, a particular location. In this definition, music can evoke place rather than be tied to it. Much like the idea of "belonging" to a place, a person might "belong to" Heart's Delight, TB but travel the world while still feeling akin to other residents of Heart's Delight. This is particularly significant to Newfoundlanders who live and work outside of the province. This imagined community of Newfoundlanders may access their sense of belonging through mediated music no matter where they are in the world. In this way, mediated music

becomes a part of musical sense of place rather than being simply “schizophonic” as coined by Schafer and discussed by Feld (Feld, 1994, 258-259; Schafer 1969, 43-47).

On the other hand, a sense, or senses, of musical place can be read as fixing a particular music to a location. This is an experiential concept, linked more specifically to the physical senses and experience of music itself. To sense a musical place is to be where music happens, to know how it sounds, what it feels like to listen, play or dance to that music with other people in the same space. When musicians speak about the specific experiences of music they often talk about particular people and locations to which that music is tied. However, I would argue it is rare, if a musician or listener is emotionally invested in the music, that he or she only speaks to the actual musical place and not a broader musical sense of place. Therefore “senses of musical place” is nested within “musical senses of place.” That said, the distinction between the imagined concept of “musical senses of place,” and the experiential “senses of musical place” can be useful. As will be shown in Chapter Seven, in particular, some musicians amended their musical senses of place regarding Newfoundland once they had experiential knowledge of Irish music in Ireland.

The case studies in this dissertation show how music broadcast through electronic mass media (radio, television and recordings) has played a major role in making and imagining place. This work acknowledges Irish music and musicians as one significant component of Newfoundland music. It also nuances Irish music as a naturalized and inherited part of Newfoundland musical senses of place by showing that much of the repertoire has been brought to the province since the 1940s through mediated electronic mass media.

**Chapter Three:**  
***Britain's Oldest Colony and Canada's Newest Province:  
Perspectives on Newfoundland History and the Irish in  
Newfoundland***

***3.1 Introduction***

This chapter examines perceptions of Newfoundland history and partially answers the “cultural history” portion of my central question by providing background information which will frame the later musical discussions. Many Newfoundlanders have been presenting themselves as culturally Irish in the last few decades, but where do the Irish sit in Newfoundland’s history? Is the rewriting of Newfoundland history to highlight the Irish contribution an effort to recognize a group of people previously left out, or an invented tradition in the Hobsbawm-ian sense?

Like any individual or group of people, Newfoundlanders’ history, identity and sense of place is complex and multiple. All at once, one can be a ranting and roaring Newfoundlander, a proud peaceful Canadian citizen and feel the tug of real, or imagined, ancestral roots spanning the ocean to England, Ireland, France or Scotland as well as the many other countries from which Newfoundlanders have come.

***3.2 Shifts of Perspective in Newfoundland History***

Historian Jerry Bannister has stated that Newfoundland history until the 1970s had been characterized by a “theme of struggle and conflict” but since the 1970s is based on a “notion of loss” and a “history of bereavement” (2002, 175-176). In relation to

perceptions of Confederation, historian Jeff Webb has explained that “the Newfoundland nationalism expressed by [Premier] Brian Peckford in the 1970s did not exist among Newfoundlanders at the end of the 1940s” (1998, 179). Bannister argues that in recent decades there has been a shift in our view of the past and “while Judge Prowse had celebrated Newfoundland’s progress in face of adversity” in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Newfoundlanders “now tend to see [them]selves as trapped by history” (2002, 176-188). Bannister explains that, in the Prowse’s famous 1895 tome, *A History of Newfoundland*, the past was divided into digestible sections which separated it from the present drive for progress and modernity (Bannister 2003, 125; Prowse [1895] 2002). This type of history has been described by Matthews as “fence-building,” when the author:

erect[s] historical ‘posts’ in a straight line between the beginning and the end. Periods of time between the political events are covered only by a strand of wire which connects the posts. (1978, 28)

In the last 40 years, historians have started to merge Newfoundland history into a “single meta-narrative which deliberately blurs the lines between past and present” (Bannister 2003, 125). The past, therefore, continues into our present-day lives and influences our perception of ourselves as an imagined community of Newfoundlanders. I’ve noticed a thread throughout historical accounts and political manoeuvres from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the present day which presents an image of Newfoundland(ers) as valiantly engaged in a constant struggle against a larger oppressor, a type of David and Goliath complex. One only need recall Premier Tobin’s Turbot War or Premier

Williams' ABC (Anything But Conservative) campaign to know that this type of pluck and bravado still holds sway in Newfoundland.<sup>51</sup>

According to Bannister, in 1793 Chief Justice John Reeves penned the “single most influential statement ever written about Newfoundland” in which he pitted the “planters and inhabitants” against the “adventurers and merchants” (Bannister 2002, 178; Reeves [1793] 1967). Literary historian and dialectologist George Story (1997, 119) and historian Keith Matthews (1978, 22) both point to Reeves as the developer of the idea of group conflict which has played a central role in Newfoundland history, particularly in relation to the theory of retarded settlement.<sup>52</sup> In his turn Reeves influenced other early 19<sup>th</sup>-century histories including Anspach (1819), Carson (1813), and Morris (1827). These historians established a pattern followed most famously and enduringly by Prowse in his 1895 *History* (Webb 1998, 119). According to Bannister, Prowse set up a series of historical “villains and heroes” through which Newfoundlanders “triumphed over adversity” (2002, 177). Prowse’s approach to history was taken up in the collective psyche by Smallwood’s *Barrelman* radio programs and Leslie Harris’ school text book. I would suggest that this predilection for some Newfoundlanders to see themselves as underdogs helps aid their leanings towards embracing the Irish portion of their history, another great underdog who eventually was victorious and gained independence and respect.

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<sup>51</sup> The ABC campaign was set up by Newfoundland Conservative Premier Danny Williams during the 2009 federal election to encourage Newfoundlanders to vote for any party other than the federal Conservative party of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In 2009 the province did not elect any Conservative Members of Parliament (MP). In 2011 one Conservative MP was elected in Labrador.

<sup>52</sup> The theory of retarded settlement suggests that Newfoundland’s progress as a colony was slow due to laws which forbid settlement so as to aid the fishery. While there were some laws that restricted settlement, particularly by the French after the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, Pope explains that the laws were not well enforced and did not deter settlement effectively (2008, 42-43).

### ***3.3 A Brief History of Newfoundland and Labrador's Peoples and Immigration Patterns***

This chapter focuses on a history of Irish connections with Newfoundland. However, the Irish are only part of Newfoundland's history, so I offer a very brief overview of the peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador, both native and European.

#### ***3.3.1 Aboriginal Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador***

Newfoundland and Labrador has been home to at least five different aboriginal groups, the Beothuck, the Inuit, the Innu, the Mi'kmaq, and the Métis. There were also pre-European contact groups including the Dorset, Thule and the Maritime Archaic Indians. The Aboriginal people of Newfoundland and Labrador have had a different history from many of their counterparts in Canada and the United States. As most of the Aboriginal people lived in sparsely populated Labrador the pre-Confederation governments of Newfoundland did not negotiate treaties or land claims. As Higgins explains:

At the time of Confederation in 1949, the Newfoundland and Labrador government did not have any special agencies in place to deal with Aboriginal affairs and it had not developed a system of reserves or land claim treaties with the Innu, Mi'kmaq, Inuit, and Métis people. In Canada, the Indian Act made the federal government financially responsible for the delivery of health, education, and other social services to much of its Aboriginal population.

When Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada, the two governments did not extend the Act to the new province's Aboriginal peoples. Government officials argued that doing so would disenfranchise Newfoundland and Labrador's Indigenous residents, who, unlike most status Indians in Canada, had the right to

vote.<sup>53</sup> Some academics today question that argument and instead suggest the large costs of providing services to Labrador's remote and dispersed population deterred Ottawa from including its Aboriginal peoples under the Indian Act. (2008, np)

The Beothuks inhabited the island portion of the province and were part of the Algonkian language group (Pastore 1997, np). In 1829, with the death of Shanawdithit, the Beothuks, as a recognized group of people, were regarded by many historians as extinct primarily due to European contact.

The Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland descended from the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. There are two bands in Newfoundland but only one reserve. The Qalipu First Nation, officially formed in September 2011, is a landless band; while the Miawpukek First Nation lives in the community of Conne River or Miawpukek on the south coast of the island (CBC 2011, np; A. Fitzpatrick 2011, np; Mawi'omi 2006, np; Pastore 1997, np; Qalipu Mi'kmaq ca. 2011, np). According to the band website Miawpukek became a year-round settlement ca. 1822 before which it was one of the regular nomadic camp sites used by the Mi'kmaq in their travels throughout Atlantic Canada, Newfoundland, Quebec and Maine (Mawi'omi 2006, np). In 2006 there were about 787 members on the reserve and 1779 members living off the reserve (ibid.).<sup>54</sup>

The Innu were previously known as the Naskapi-Montagnais and are now known as the Innu Nation (Higgins 2008, np; Pastore 1997, np). In Labrador they reside in two settlements, Natuashish, on the upper Labrador coast and Sheshatsiu on Lake Melville. In 2006 the Innu Nation entered negotiations towards self-governance with the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada (Higgins 2008, np). In the

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<sup>53</sup> As of late September 2011, the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq were granted official status (CBC 2011, np)

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Janice Tulk has researched the music of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq in her doctoral thesis (2008).

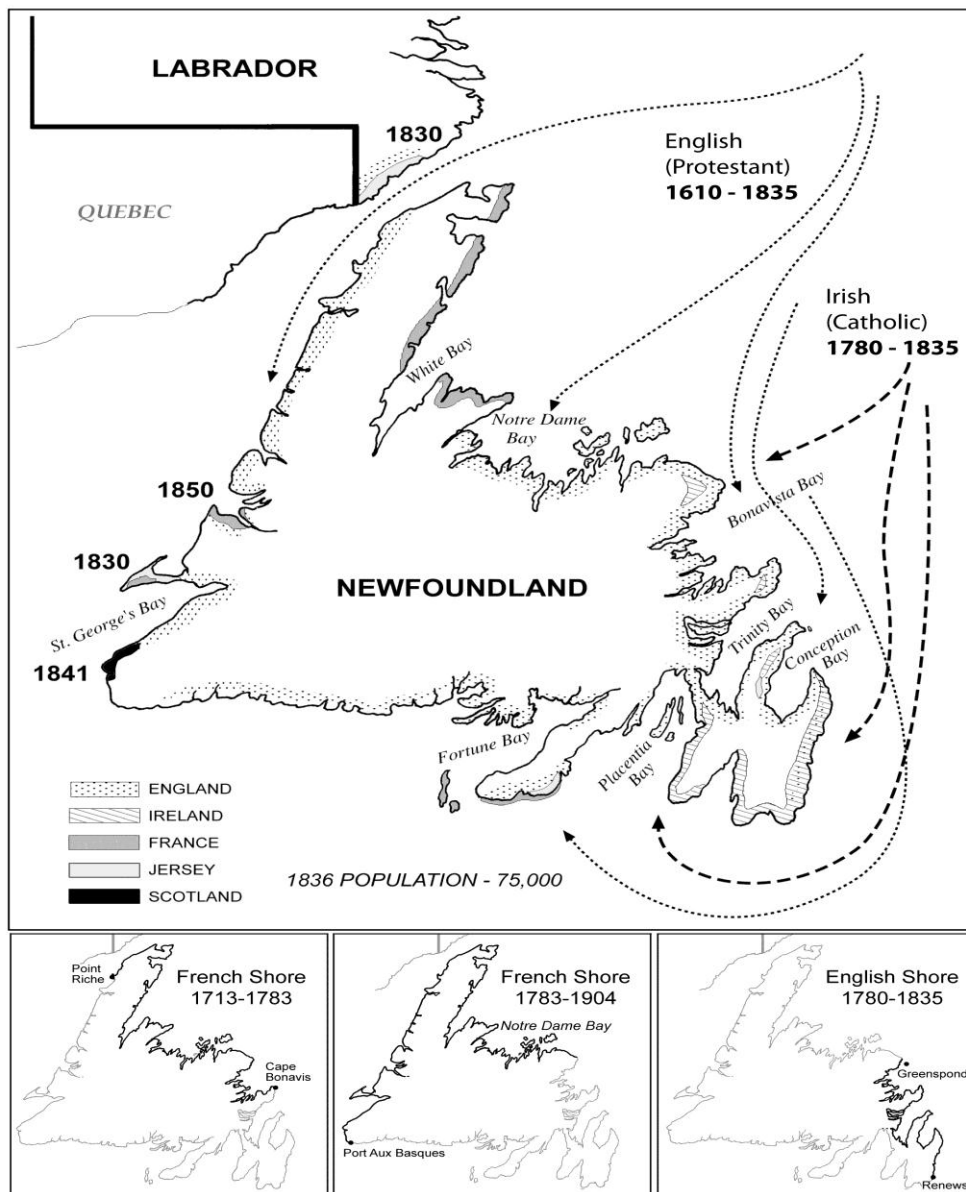
1980s there were several Innu rock/country bands who were particularly popular in Quebec (Diamond, B., pers. comm. 2011). I am not aware of any musical influences or interaction between European settlers and the Beothuck.

The Inuit of Labrador descended from the Thule people who came to Labrador about 1200 AD (Pastore 1997, np). Their main settlements are along the coast with the most northerly year-round community at Nain. In 2005, they attained self-governance with the Nunatsiavut Transitional Government (Nunatsiavut Government 2009, np). In Makkovik and along the Labrador coast in Nain and Hopedale, the Inuit were in contact with the Moravians who taught them their choral and classical instrument traditions (Gordon 2007). Some of these are still practiced today. In 2007, I spoke with the music teacher who had started a fiddle group in Makkovik with the community's help (Pretty 2007).

The Métis of Labrador are descended from Inuit and European travelers, including Scottish trappers for the Hudson Bay Company (NunatuKavut Labrador Métis Nation 2007, np). The NunatuKavut Labrador Métis Nation represents Labrador Métis who primarily live around Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the lower half of Labrador including the coast (ibid.). In 2007, I was able to speak with two members of the Montague Métis family, Lester (2007a) and Louie (2007b), both of whom play fiddle and play very different styles from Canadian old-time country to a Scottish type style.



### 3.3.2 European Settlement and Immigration - The English



Map Five: European Settlement and Immigration Patterns in Newfoundland (1610-1835)

In 1497, John Cabot (ca. 1455 -1498), funded by England discovered Newfoundland on a voyage intended to find a passage to China (Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage 1997, np; 2010a, np). In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert declared the first

British laws in North America. Many have misinterpreted this as claiming Newfoundland as a colony. It turns out that instead it was a global political move to send a message to the King of Spain to leave North America out of his colonialist plans. While it *was* the first declaration of laws by Britain in the New World, it did not constitute a colony and did not affect people who were living and working on the island (L. Harris 1968, 36). Eventually England did take over the running of the island, first as an extension of England itself and then as a colony. Similar to Irish immigrations, there were seasonal (migratory fishermen), temporary (over-wintering) and permanent English settlers (Mannion 1993-1994, 20). While seasonal migrations had started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English permanent settlement began in Newfoundland through “colonizing schemes” in the early 1600s including Cupids and Ferryland (Hancock 2000a, np; 2000b, np). As settlement was tied to the fishery the majority of immigrants came from the Southwest portion of Britain known as the West Country. The migratory fishery extended until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and Hancock notes that in the West Country the seasonal fishermen were recognized as “Newfoundland men” who constituted a separate portion of the workforce (Hancock 2000b, np). The English generally settled on the Avalon and along the East Coast in order to be close to the fishery. [Please see Map Five above.] The permanent population of the island did not exceed the temporary or seasonal population until the 1780s and did not reach ten thousand until the 1790s after which it grew exponentially with both English and Irish immigration until the 1830s (Hancock 1977, 20). English settlers formed the majority of the population for most of Newfoundland’s history, except during particularly heavy Irish immigration, and English merchants and admirals controlled the fishery and the economy.

### ***3.3.3 European Settlement and Immigration -The French 1504-1904***

The French were one of the first nations to prosecute the Newfoundland fishery with boats documented in Newfoundland waters as early as 1504 (Higgins 2009a, np). Higgins points out that, as Roman Catholics, the French were motivated by both market and religious reasons to become a major part of an abundant fishery as their population preferred to eat fish for almost one-third of the year (2009b, np). The French settlers in Newfoundland came from two different sources: the first from France as part of the fishery and the other from Acadian Atlantic Canada (ibid.). As with other migrations there were varying lengths of settlement from seasonal to permanent. In the case of the French fishery the majority were temporary and did not stay. Along with a few Basque whalers most of the French fishermen were from Brittany or Normandy, the former concentrated on the southern coast of Labrador (Higgins 2009c, np). The Breton and Norman fishery focused on the “Petit Nord” or the Great Northern Peninsula and down the west coast of the Island (ibid.). There were some permanent French settlers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but they concentrated around Placentia Bay (PB) and the Burin Peninsula (BP) (ibid.). [Please see Map Five above.]

Placentia or *Plaisance* was established by the French as their capital of Newfoundland in the 1660s but was abandoned in 1713 after the Treaty of Utrecht. The Treaty gave England dominion over all of Newfoundland and restricted the French fishery to the northeast coast (ibid.). The Treaty of Versailles in 1783 changed the French Shore again giving them the entirety of the west coast including the east portion of the GNP (ibid.). Under both treaties the French were given fishing rights but not allowed to build permanent structures (ibid.). In 1904, the French gave up their fishing

rights in Newfoundland, choosing instead to base their fishery from the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon so they could take over British colonies in Africa (ibid.).

Unlike the migratory French, the Acadians were primarily farmers and were attracted to the sparsely populated west coast of Newfoundland. Most of the Acadians arrived from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and the Magdalen Islands between 1820 and 1860 settling around the Port-au-Port Peninsula and St. George's Bay. By 1830 there were about 1,200 Acadians in this region (Higgins 2009b, np). It is from this population that today's French-Newfoundlanders descended, including fiddler Emile Benoit.

#### ***3.3.4 European Settlement and Immigration- The Scottish***

Although the Scottish are not generally considered amongst the major immigrants to Newfoundland there is a history of their settlement on the island since the 17<sup>th</sup> century as some Scottish were involved in early settlements such as Cupids (Higgins 2009d, np). There were three sections of Scottish immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. [Please see Map Five above.] The first were traders with the Hudson's Bay Company who went to Labrador, some of whom intermarried with the Inuit and helped to create today's Inuit-Métis (Higgins 2009d, np; Louis Montague 2007b; NunatuKavut Labrador Métis Nation 2007, np). The second were Lowland Presbyterian Scottish who spoke English and moved to the Avalon Peninsula. The third, which is the most distinctive today, are the Highland Scots who moved via Cape Breton to the Codroy Valley on the southwest coast of the Island between 1841 and the 1860s (Higgins 2009d, np). These people spoke Gaelic, were Roman Catholic farmers, and formed a group which still retains a distinct Scottish identity within Newfoundland today (Higgins 2009d,

np). Margaret Bennett completed a detailed ethnography of the Codroy Valley in the 1980s and published *The Last Stronghold: The Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland* (1989).<sup>55</sup>

All of the European settlers contributed to the character of what is seen as Newfoundland music today. The English were particularly noted for their songs, however, I have heard structures in Morris dancing music which make me suspect that Morris dancing, or English instrumental music, may have been an influence on Newfoundland tunes. Southern England is not particularly known for its fiddle music, but I have been told by English musicians that there was a fiddle tradition which did not survive the industrial revolution.<sup>56</sup> The French have contributed both songs and instrumental music. Some musicians connect the high incidence of asymmetry, or “crookedness” of the instrumental dance music in Newfoundland, particularly on the west coast of the island to the French fishermen and the proximity of Quebec. As noted the Scottish have retained a particular tradition on the west coast and of course, the Irish have brought multiple influences to the Island’s music through immigration and recordings.

### ***3.4 History of Irish Connections to Newfoundland***

Historian John Mannion has been at the forefront of examining the role of Irish men in early Newfoundland history. Historian Willeen Keough has researched the place of 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century women in Irish-Newfoundland society on the southern Avalon

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<sup>55</sup> Bennett released a double compact disc and musician of Gaelic speaker and Scottish-Newfoundlander Allan MacArthur in both English and Scottish-Gaelic (2009).

<sup>56</sup> This is a tracing I would very much be interested in exploring in the future.

(2008b). Nineteenth century historians dismissed the Irish as a poor, working class that were generally “a drunken, disorderly treacherous group requiring constant regulation and control” who often caused more trouble than they were worth (Keough 2012, 2). However, Newfoundlanders have been examining their history more closely, and finding that the Irish have made significant contributions to the Newfoundland character. The liner notes of the *Island to Island* CD written by Peter Browne of Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), Ireland’s national public service broadcaster, noted that the Irish in Newfoundland were “unique among Irish emigrants to North America in that they went there before the Famine” (quoted in Creagh and Desplanques 2003, 1-2).<sup>57</sup> Writer Des Walsh, who wrote the introduction to the Newfoundland liner notes, states that until recently not much attention was paid to the Newfoundland Irish as “no one really knew we were here” (quoted in *ibid.*, 2). Historically this was anything but true, as, according to historian Cyril Byrne, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newfoundland was sometimes referred to as “trans-Atlantic Ireland” (1992, 369).

### ***3.4.1 Irishmen in the Migratory Fishery and Provisions Trade***

It is generally agreed that the Irish came to Newfoundland with the French and English as a part of the migratory fishery. There are also earlier references. A *Canadian Geographic* article speculated about early Celtic peoples landing on the Great Northern

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<sup>57</sup> The Irish Potato famine (1845-49) occurred after a massive population explosion in Ireland and the proliferation of potato blight which destroyed crops resulting in starvation and mass emigration from the island (Mokyr 2010, np).

Peninsula where a rock with supposed *ogham*<sup>58</sup> writing was found (McGee and Tuck 1977, 67). Others have hypothesized that St. Brendan's 8<sup>th</sup>-century Atlantic journeys may have included Newfoundland.<sup>59</sup> Throughout the migratory fishing years the Irish played a significant role in the economic life of the island as Irishmen were recruited to work seasonally in the fishery. Waterford, Ireland was an important stop for the English West Country boats to pick up provisions and it is from this port that the majority of Irish came. Southwestern Ireland was well established in Europe-Newfoundland trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; however, there is evidence that a few ships from Dublin were involved as early as the 1590s (Appleby 1986, 152). According to Mannion, Dublin was still involved in trade with Newfoundland at the end of the 1600s (2001, 265). He has stated that:

Dublin's contribution to Irish migration was, however, peripheral. Most vessels were traders employing sailors only, some of whom fished. Dublin's trade to Newfoundland declined after 1730; that from south Munster, by contrast, expanded....Vessels from virtually every port in the English fishery called in to Waterford Harbour or quay to collect passengers and provisions, scattering the Irish all along the [Newfoundland] English Shore. Bideford was especially prominent in forging links between Waterford and the south Avalon. (ibid., 272)

Mannion conducted an interesting study about the importance of the 17th-century Irish provisions trade and the Newfoundland diet (2000b, 2). The fact that Newfoundland lies in a harsh agricultural zone, beyond the limits of grain production, with shallow rocky soil and a short growing season was one of the issues surrounding the debates on moving a permanent population there in the late 1600s (ibid., 3). He has stated that:

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<sup>58</sup> *Ogham* is the ancient written form of the Irish Gaelic language which consisted of a series of straight lines.

<sup>59</sup> St. Brendan travelled in a small woven boat called a *coracle*. It is from the speculation about these voyages that the Coracle Fellowships at Memorial University take their name (Memorial University of Newfoundland 2008, np).

Food is at the core of the Newfoundland experience. It permeates several salient themes of the island's historical geography: migration, commerce, colonization, settlement, adaptation, ecology, landscape, livelihood, tradition and social class....At first glance, it appears paradoxical that Newfoundland, a huge North Atlantic island located as far south as France, and a major exporter of high-protein food in the form of dried and salted cod, should require substantial imports of victuals annually to survive. Yet such was the case from the arrival of the first Europeans on the island after 1500. (ibid., 2)

A typical mariner's diet was drawn from "dozens" of North Atlantic ports but Irish beef and bread began to dominate in the late 1600s (ibid., 10). The importation of beef was due in great part to the Cattle Acts of 1663 and 1667 which allowed young cattle to be raised to maturity in southern Ireland where they were slaughtered and the resulting beef and butter were exported to England and Newfoundland (ibid., 11-12). Considering the vital importance of the Irish-Newfoundland provisions trade in the 1670s, one cannot help but wonder how the history of Newfoundland might have differed if the Cattle Acts had not been enacted. With more ships visiting Ireland for supplies, captains took on more crew, thus starting Irish immigration. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century Waterford became "one of the great Irish ports" as it traded with England and had a "virtual monopoly in the French and Iberian trade" as well as being the "principal centre of the Newfoundland trade" (Cullen 1958, 166-167). Despite Waterford's important place in supplying the migratory fishery it has largely been left out of shipping histories (Mannion 1994, 116). As shipping histories are being uncovered so are the strong connections between Newfoundland and Waterford.



### ***3.4.2 Irish Immigration and Settlement in Newfoundland***

During the rise of the provisions trade, the majority of inhabitants in Newfoundland were English. Mannion states that in 1700 “from Renews [(SS)] to Greenspond [(BB)]” settlers “were almost entirely English” but by 1750 “the Irish accounted for roughly 40 percent” of the “English shore” (2001, 257). Remarkably, immigration of Irishmen to Newfoundland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was from a very specific region of southwestern Ireland, namely 30 miles around Waterford and Wexford. This concentration of emigration was due entirely to the provisions trade. Mannion has noted that “Ireland’s overseas commerce was profoundly regional in character... as routes linked particular ports and hinterlands to specific localities abroad” (1994, 116). In what he calls “one of the most organized and orderly movements of labour across the Atlantic in the eighteenth century, each port in southwest England tended to concentrate on particular stretches of the Newfoundland shore” (ibid., 129). Ships leaving Waterford with passengers and provisions rarely returned directly. Instead they sailed to southern Europe with fish to sell and left their passengers in Newfoundland to make other arrangements (ibid., 128-129). This situation left substantial numbers of Irish men and servant women to over-winter in Newfoundland, a state of affairs which frequently resulted in complaints of disorderly conduct and idleness from the English settlers (McCarthy 1999, 6-7). Another reason for increasing numbers of Irish in Newfoundland was a 1698 English law requiring every fishing boat to “carry two inexperienced seamen in a crew of six” (Dillon 1971, 15). Many of these “green men” came from Ireland and subsequently stayed. An exhibit at the Rooms Provincial Museum explains that “Newfoundland forged new identities for these Irish settlers, most of whom came from

farming backgrounds. While they continued to farm, the cod fishery now dominated their lives” (J. Mannion 2009, np). Although the Irish in Newfoundland were often portrayed as lazy and wayward by the English merchants and planters, according to Mannion, winter work for the Irish outside of the city was anything but idle. They were put to work lumbering for fuel, “hauling it out over the ice and snow on frozen ground.” The winter weather was “harsher than anything witnessed in western Europe” (2001, 258). In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, servants were rarely recorded upon arrival but were mostly Irish until 1732. Women servants were quite common. At the time Captain James Story commented that:

They likewise bring over a great many women passengers which they sell for servants and a little after their coming they marry among the fishermen that live there with the planters, and being extremely poor, contract such debts as they are not able to pay. If course be not speedily taken for the preservation [prevention] of such passengers coming over, the country will be ruined. (quoted in *ibid.*, 262)

Regular permanent settlement did not occur in Newfoundland until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but before this many Irish men were hired for a “Newfoundland season” which consisted of two fishing seasons with a winter in between. Mannion has identified three types of Irish immigration to Newfoundland, the first being seasonal with the fishery, the second was to stay two summers and a winter with the fishery and the third type was permanent (1993-1994, 20). These constitute his “three modes of migration” model namely “seasonal, temporary and permanent” settlement in Newfoundland (1977, 5). Mannion states that “for much of its early history, Newfoundland had a highly transient, fluctuating population,” and this made it “difficult to measure the growth of the permanent population” (1977, 1). A 1752 census shows that the Irish made up approximately half of the total population and in 1753 they outnumbered the English in

many communities (McCarthy 1999, 8).<sup>60</sup> Elliot states that “Irish settlement in Newfoundland best exemplifies the idea that emigration followed existing trade routes” (1992, 22). Besides seasonal fishermen who decided to stay, the primary Irish immigrations to Newfoundland were between 1811-1816 and 1825-1833 (Mannion 1977, 7). The majority of the Irish who settled in Newfoundland stayed on the Avalon Peninsula. Although many Irish mixed with the English, Mannion points out that those in other areas of the Avalon were “by far the most isolated ethnically” in the eastern region of North America (1974, 23). Today the role of Irishmen in the migratory fishery and in settlement during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century is cited as the primary connection between Newfoundland and Ireland. Part of the influx of Irish settlers was due to a population explosion in Ireland in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries during which the population of Ireland increased exponentially to seven million. This made Newfoundland an “attractive alternative” particularly for second sons who would not inherit land in Ireland (Casey 1986, 211). At the time Newfoundland offered opportunities for Irish people in the fishery, trades and as domestic servants (ibid.). According to McCarthy, during 1814 alone, ships arrived with seven thousand Irish immigrants (1999, 120). Unlike many other areas of the Irish diaspora, the Newfoundland immigration pre-dated the mass famine emigrations of the 1840s which “bypassed Newfoundland almost completely” (Mannion 1977, 7). Despite the significant immigration of 35,000 Irish in the first

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<sup>60</sup> These and other 19<sup>th</sup>-century statistics are often cited as evidence that Newfoundland is primarily Irish in character. Keough has examined mid-20<sup>th</sup>- to early 21<sup>st</sup>- century census data to show that the number of people who claim Irish ancestry is much lower. These stats range from 14.8% in 1951 to 25% in 2001 (2008a, 14-16).

decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many used Newfoundland as a “stepping stone to North America” and did not settle permanently on the island (Mannion 1993-1994, 20).

### ***3.4.3 Fear of the Irish: Penal Laws (1750), Convict Ship (1789), United Irish Uprising (1800)***

In the scholarly material I have surveyed regarding Irish history in Newfoundland, there are a few recurring themes and events such as the implementation of the Penal Laws in 1755, the convict ship of 1789, and the alleged United Uprising of 1800. There is frequent mention of Irish “green men” and servants coming and going, and complaints by authorities about their threat to the class structure of English merchants, but few details of their lives. Mannion offers a few insights. He describes work done on farms both by Irish owners and servants (1987). He also examines the life of Irish merchant Patrick Morris who worked in the Irish passenger trade in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (1986). Mannion stated that in the late 1700s the Irish-Catholics outnumbered English-Protestants two to one in St. John’s but that the English owned two-thirds of the property (ibid., 184). During Morris’ time, only five of forty-five merchants in the city were Irish, but interestingly Irish artisans eventually became economically important. According to Mannion, the Irish came to dominate in many of the trades including shop keepers, tailors, coopers and blacksmiths (ibid.). Outside of politicians, few upper class Irish people or merchants are featured in scholarly research. The picture is normally painted of a great swath of uneducated Irish servants and fishermen who caused trouble, alternated

with infrequent mention of important politicians like Newfoundland's first Irish-born Prime Minister Philip Little (1824-1897).<sup>61</sup>

Two of the important events in Irish-Newfoundland history, the mutiny and the enforcement of Penal Laws<sup>62</sup> by Governor Richard Dorrill, were principally behind the rhetoric that led to fear of the Irish. As Cyril Byrne states:

The Irish in Newfoundland presented a strategic problem to the British. The colonial records for Newfoundland throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are full of rumblings about the political unreliability of the Irish. (1999, 7)

There were certain concrete reasons for these fears. Irish servants had helped the French decimate the English shore from the southern Avalon to Conception Bay including St. John's itself in the winter season of 1696-1697 (ibid., 8). Irish servants often refused to take the oath of loyalty to England and in Europe were known to join the French army. Thus the officials in Newfoundland felt that the Irish were untrustworthy if war broke out between England and France (ibid.).

An incident in 1789 added to the generalized fear of the Irish. In July, an Irish convict ship arrived on the southern shore of the Avalon Peninsula due to lack of supplies and illness (Bannister 1998, 95). Over one hundred convicts were put ashore and allowed to make their own way to St. John's amid rumors of violence and arson (ibid., 99-100). While there was no official policy of sending convict ships to Newfoundland, there was a history of individual offenders being illegally hired into the fishery (ibid., 97-99). The bad reputations of the abandoned convicts led to their implication not only in an attempt

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<sup>61</sup> For information on Philip Little and Responsible Government in Newfoundland from 1855-1933 see (Webb 2001, np).

<sup>62</sup> I will address the Penal Laws in the next section 3.4.4 on Roman Catholicism in Newfoundland.

to burn down the town in August, but they were also blamed for a deadly fever (ibid., 104-105). In the end, only 80 of the convicts were gathered and shipped back to England while the others were unaccounted for (ibid., 105). Historian McCarthy, outlines how the Irish were considered troublemakers in general and lists numerous incidents over the centuries in which Irish people were brought to court in Newfoundland on charges from minor issues such as missed rent (1662) to major crimes like rape (1751) and murder (1720, 1755) and riots (1765, 1788, 1794) amongst other misdemeanors such as public drunkenness and operating disorderly houses (McCarthy 1999, 6-7, 27-32, 65-66, 80).<sup>63</sup>

As the migratory fishery declined throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries permanent settlements were established. The English and Irish jockeyed for ethnic territory by asserting political, ethnic and religious identities from their homeland including evoking provocative groups such as the Orangemen, Ribbon men, Fenians, Whiteboys and various Irish gangs. Keough examined the events of two Orangemen Day parades in Conception Bay where there was an English protestant majority with a sizeable Irish Catholic minority. In both instances, including the famous 1883 Harbour Grace-Riverhead riot in which several people were killed, Keough asserts it was less about religion and more about using “marching [as a] means of asserting identity and ritualizing space” (2008b, 12).

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<sup>63</sup> McCarthy relied on court records and therefore his picture of the Irish does tend to enumerate their run-ins with the law. These are just a few of the multitude of examples he cites in his book *The Irish in Newfoundland 1600-1900: Their Trails, Tribulations & Triumphs*.

An alleged mutiny in the St. John's Regiment was planned for Sunday, April 20, 1800.<sup>64</sup> Contemporary thought and subsequent historical writings connected it to an uprising in Ireland two years earlier by the United Irishmen in Wexford after which several executions were carried out. In St. John's, Bishop O'Donnel heard about the plot in advance and told the authorities. The story goes that the United Irishmen within the St. John's Regiment were to ambush the Protestant church during Sunday service and kill the leaders and merchants of the colony, most of whom were English. One version of the plan was to take over the island and start a republic with Bishop O'Donnel as president; another was to flee to the United States (McCarthy 1999, 101). Considering it was the Bishop who revealed the plot that seems a fairly unlikely story. When the Sunday weather was fine, the whole regiment was ordered out to exercise rather than to church. In this simple way the plot was thwarted. Later that week, a number of soldiers deserted but were captured; eight were ultimately hung for being United Irishmen (O'Hara 2000, 18). Considering the close ties between St. John's and southern Ireland, it is quite believable that news of the previous rebellion could have reached this side of the Atlantic; however, scholars such as John Mannion and Aiden O'Hara have sought to show nuances in the situation (Mannion 1998-1999, 48-49; O'Hara 2000, 21). Although the possibility of there being United Irishmen in St. John's was real, and some years later there were claims of witnesses to their indoctrination, Mannion claims that the Newfoundland Irish were "illiterate...spoke Irish only, or halting English" and were generally politically unaware and politically unorganized (1998-1999, 48). He suggests

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<sup>64</sup> This alleged mutiny was recreated in local St. John's theatre. In the summer of 2007 Jason Ross Sellars performed a Punch and Judy puppet theatre piece called "The Uprising" (Sellars 2007).

instead that the rebellion may have had as much to do with bad conditions, little food, a potential regimental move to Halifax and a broken promise that the soldiers could leave for the summer fishery (ibid., 48-49). There is another theory that General Skerrett who had served in Wexford during the 1798 rebellion and then transferred to Newfoundland, had either been put there to draw out United Irishmen or that he was paranoid. According to O'Hara in 1805 Skerrett claimed that he had been "crushing rebellious propensities, insurrection and mutiny" amongst fifty thousand United Irishmen when the entire population of Newfoundland only numbered twenty-five thousand (2000, 21). Skerrett was not the only official who liked to stir the pot and claim the Irish were about to cause trouble. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, historian Lewis Anspach also claimed that "St. John's was...a hotbed of revolution" (Mannion 1998-1999, 57).

These rebellious sentiments changed in the Irish-Newfoundlanders over time. Historian Carolyn Lambert has shown that, between 1840 and 1886, the Irish-Catholics in St. John's were quite interested in Irish affairs but did not promote violence. In fact she states that they "believed themselves to be amongst the most loyal colonists in the Empire" and were staunch "constitutional nationalists and would remain so unswervingly" (2008b, 47-48). Despite fears to the contrary, the Irish in Newfoundland sought to integrate themselves into the British controlled society of the island as full citizens.

#### ***3.4.4 Roman Catholicism and the Irish in Newfoundland***

In 1755 the threat of war with France loomed and authorities in Newfoundland were nervous. The Penal Laws in England had been in place for some time but they were



enforced irregularly throughout the Empire. However, Governor Dorrill decided to invoke the Laws in 1755 in Conception Bay (CB) (C. Byrne 1999, 8). The enforcement of the Penal Laws shows how closely Irishness and Catholicism were linked. To be Catholic meant being Irish in Newfoundland. There were few regular priests on the island in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and those who were present generally hailed from Waterford but lived “in disguise” (N. Burke 1971, 104). Historian Kevin Whelan states that “for the first century of the immigrant Church...priests were recruited almost totally from Ireland” (1984-1985, 55). The Penal Laws made conducting mass a crime. During the enforcement of these laws a number of houses were burnt down and families evicted from the island (C. Byrne 1999, 9). Keough has examined a number of incidents around Conception Bay (CB) on the Avalon Peninsula in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this area there were more English-Protestants than Irish-Catholics and Keough suggests that, similar to marching, the conducting of Catholic masses around CB in that time period was linked more to establishing an ethnic identity and territory rather than religious fervor. She asserts this on the basis that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century even the Irish-Catholics in Ireland were not as devoted to celebrating mass as the portrayals of their counterparts in Newfoundland (2012, 1-2).

In *The Fishing Ground* exhibit at the Rooms Provincial Museum, it is asserted that “Catholicism was at the heart of Irish-Newfoundland identity” (J. Mannion 2009, np). For over 150 years Catholicism has been a very strong institution in Newfoundland society and politics. As Patrick O’Flaherty has stated:

Beginning with Fleming in the 1830s, the bishops set out to create an imposing infrastructure of cathedrals, dioceses, convents, schools, religious orders and lay organizations, most of it in place by 1900. Though founded on supernatural faith,

the church they made was monumental and earthly. It was an alternative power structure to the Protestant state, and conferred more than mere spiritual authority. The source of that power, the model for the masonry, was Ireland. As late as 1895, Irish-born priests were still in a majority in the parishes of Newfoundland and the emerging native clergy was stamped by the Irish influence. (1986, 6)

The Most Reverend Bishop M. F. Howley outlined the history of the Roman Catholic Church in an appendix to Prowse's reprinted history ([1895] 2002, 26-37).<sup>65</sup> Howley links the rise of Roman Catholicism in Newfoundland to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> -century Irish immigrations. Priests were present on the Island ministering to the Roman Catholic lay population which had risen to over twenty thousand by the end of the century. Howley "dates the birth of the Catholic Church in Newfoundland" to 1784 when it was given "official recognition from Rome" (ibid., 27). The church began to gain power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century around the same time that Irishmen were also in political power. In 1848 there were two dioceses, over twenty-four priests, 14 convents, and 65 churches (ibid., 29). The Basilica of St. John the Baptist was not consecrated until 1855 but its first mass was held in 1850. By 1857 there were 57,000 Roman Catholics on the island (Howley [1895] 2002, 29; Sisters of Mercy n.d., np). Comparatively, 40 years later in 1891 there were 69,823 Anglicans, 54 clergy and 135 churches (Prowse [1895] 2002, 24). In a few paragraphs inserted into Howley's article in Prowse, he states that:

The Catholic Church in this Colony was founded by poor Irishmen, and by Irishmen only, with no extraneous help; it was begun in an evil time of persecution and penal laws, when the Catholic priest was hunted like a bandit, when all outward observances of the faith were prohibited under the direst pains and punishments; for years it was only amidst the lonely rocks and under the canopy of heaven that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass could be offered up by the

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<sup>65</sup> A few masses were celebrated by early explorers. For example, Augustine monks came on Cabot's ill-fated second voyage and the first mass in Labrador occurred in 1534. The Roman Catholic Church arrived in Newfoundland with the French in 1689 at Placentia where they built churches which were active until the French left after the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht (Howley [1895] 2002, 26-27).

sorely persecuted clergy. To human eyes, the Catholic Church in the Colony seemed a very poor institution, despised and rejected of men. Outwardly she might appear feeble and failing, but she was growing strong with a Divine strength, resting on the sure foundation of the eternal Rock of the Faith. The puny seed planted by these poor Catholic Irishmen in Newfoundland, watered by Divine grace, has grown into a great tree, a devoted and noble branch of the Holy Church, under whose beneficent influence piety and charity, pure religion, morality and the blessings of a Christian education have been spread over our land. (Prowse writing in Howley [1895] 2002, 33)

Religious and educational exchanges between Newfoundland and Ireland continued during and after the arrival of the bulk of the Irish population. The Roman Catholic Church and its educational clergy were primary examples of the type of relationship maintained between Newfoundland and Ireland. As early as 1744, there are records of a Roman Catholic school in St. John's (McCarthy 1999, 177). The Presentation and Mercy Sisters came to Newfoundland to establish schools in 1833 and 1842 respectively, followed by the Franciscan Monks in 1847, and the Irish Christian Brothers in 1875 (ibid., 179, 182). McCarthy explains that curriculum in the Roman Catholic schools was based on that of Irish schools, often using the same text books. He states that since "many outport Roman Catholic teachers trained with the Sisters and later the Christian Brothers, the Irish influence was spread to the outlying harbours and did much to preserve the Irish heritage of the old country" (ibid., 181).

The Sisters were known for their musical abilities and from their start in Newfoundland were "prepared to teach all the fine arts- painting, as well as piano, violin, harp, and, of course, voice" (Wyse 2006, 49). Kristin Harris-Walsh has stated that in the early twentieth-century, the Christian Brothers played a big part in disseminating Irish step dance on the island, particularly through a performance group known as the St. Pat's

dancers. The St. Pat's Dancers were started in the 1930s as part of the Christian Brothers educational curriculum and were under their tutelage until the mid-1990s when the denominational school system in Newfoundland and Labrador was discontinued (2008, 129-130).

### ***3.4.5 Revival of the Irish Connection in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

In the past few decades there has been a significant rise in contact with Ireland and an illumination of Newfoundland history to reflect this trend countering the earlier emphasis on English and French roots. In 1996, during Ireland's economic and cultural ride on the Celtic Tiger, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Newfoundland and Irish governments.<sup>66</sup> Since the birth of this agreement, the exchange of economic and cultural activities has increased significantly. The reason given for the connection is usually the pre-famine immigration from Ireland which occurred between 1800 and 1835 and included many women, resulting in an increase in the Irish population of the St. John's region (Mannion 2000a, np). The Irish played an important role in the early Newfoundland fishery; however, I do find it curious that even institutional bodies cite a strong cultural and economic connection based on a short, but intense, period of immigration over 150 years ago when there was little contact thereafter. For example, Dublin's Irish Newfoundland Partnership which is the Irish government's administrative arm of the MOU cites:

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<sup>66</sup> I find it interesting that the MOU was signed in 1996 only one year after the denominational school system was shut down in Newfoundland. The Roman Catholic Church held much political power through its school system and even influenced the Terms of Union (see J. E. Fitzgerald 1998, 189). When the Government of Newfoundland offered only a public non-denominational system, the Roman Catholic Church lost much of its power.

The Ireland Newfoundland Partnership (INP) manages an agreement between the Governments of Ireland and Newfoundland, to recognize the deep historical links between the two Islands and identify new areas for collaboration. This Ireland-Newfoundland relationship is rooted in the significant pre-famine migration to Newfoundland primarily from the South East of Ireland. Today, over 50% of Newfoundland's population is of Irish origin, and these Irish roots are still visible in modern day Newfoundland culture. Contemporary economic relations between Ireland and Newfoundland focus largely on ocean industries, marine and geological resources, and information technology. (2009b, np)<sup>67</sup>

Under "Contemporary Relations," the INP states that for 150 years (1840s - 1980s) there was very little contact between the two islands. Anthropology PhD student Joshua Lalor has provided an interesting analysis of the INP and MOU which is discussed further in Chapter Seven. He makes the astute observation that the rhetoric surrounding the MOU seeks to justify the cultural and economic connections by naturalizing the link through genetic and even geological comparisons (2009, 36). Interestingly the Newfoundland side of the agreement, the Ireland Business Partnership (IBP), does not mention the historical links, and makes only brief reference to a "genetic" link in its annual report (2009, np). The Centre for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies at the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) states the following:

This group was formed in tandem with the twinning of St. John's, Newfoundland with Waterford City. It focused on the shared historical and cultural connections between the two regions. The Centre for Newfoundland & Labrador Studies facilitates the maintenance and progression of the unique relationship that exists between Ireland and Newfoundland [and] Labrador.  
(Waterford Institute for Technology n.d., np)<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For a period in February 2012, this website seemed to be no longer available. Inactive websites can be viewed through the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. Please see the following website and enter the inactive address to view its content (Archive 2001, np).

<sup>68</sup> Waterford and St. John's were twinned in 2002 (Stamp, 44-45).

From this brief history it is clear that the Irish were important in the history of Newfoundland, contributions which should be recognized. The Irish were important in the fishery, the general economy, the labor force, politics and religion. Certainly they have added to the overall Newfoundland character. Is their contribution so encompassing and unique as to be singled out as being the basis of Newfoundland culture as is so often uncritically suggested? The next section will examine the various ways in which Newfoundlanders have viewed themselves and their political history.

### ***3.5 The Shifting Tides of Newfoundland Identity and Senses of Place***

On top of Signal Hill, at the mouth of St. John's Harbour, there are arrows pointing to locations all over the world, placing Newfoundland in a global context. Looking out at the vast ocean one cannot help but realize that the next land mass to the east, is Ireland. Newfoundlanders have seemingly embraced a stereotype which is strikingly similar to the profile outlined for Ireland -- a poor and marginalized North Atlantic island with a boom-bust economy full of hard-working, hard-partying simple, friendly people. Many Newfoundlanders, whether or not they have Irish ancestors, now count Ireland as part of their cultural background and current multilocal sense of place. The idea of Newfoundland culturally Irish is contested by some, particularly those who hail from parts of the island where French, English or Scottish were important settlers.<sup>69</sup> As one writer for the *Atlantic Advocate*, in an article titled "The Irish in Newfoundland," wrote:

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<sup>69</sup> Ronald Rompkey has published a history of the French in Newfoundland entitled *Les Français à Terre-Neuve : un lieu mythique, une culture fantôme* (2009).

So far as I know, there isn't a drop of Irish blood in me. In fact, the closest link I have to the Irish is that I once knew a fellow at university named Pat O'Brien. Paddy was a Newfoundlander from the Avalon Peninsula, but his rolling Irish brogue would make you swear that he came from the Emerald Isle. (Coish 1981, 42)

Yet despite the lack of Irish blood in many Newfoundlanders the Irish themselves seem to identify strongly with Newfoundland. Brian McGinn has echoed the sentiments of other scholars such as folklorist Aidan O'Hara and historian Tim Coogan by declaring that Newfoundland is "the most Irish place outside of Ireland" (2000, 8). As discussed in Chapter Six and Seven many Irish musicians feel at home in Newfoundland as they feel a kinship linked to history, accent and character. The recognition of the connection has only grown stronger in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 1996 gained governmental support through the MOU. According to Kristy Clarke, an administrator with the Ireland-Newfoundland Partnership in Ireland, that agency aided over 200 projects in its first ten years (2008).

This section shows the changing nature of our political and national identity. Newfoundlanders have moved from considering themselves British subjects to Canadians citizens to Newfoundlanders and most recently embracing a heritage of Irishness which Harris-Walsh, reflecting current scholarly thought, has deemed "constructed" (2009, 1). The other side of the debate, that Irishness is an inherent part of Newfoundland culture is illustrated by Irish historian Pat Burke. He states that in the late 1700s the Newfoundland Irish started to "developed a unique culture still evident today" and that Irish language "gave way to a form of Hiberno-English" still heard today (2007, 61). This research shows that the current 21<sup>st</sup>-century Newfoundland Irishness is a balance between

recognition of Irish cultural history and equal recognition of 20<sup>th</sup>-century mass media influences.

Over the centuries Newfoundland has been situated in relation to different colonial powers. During the English migratory fishery, Newfoundland was an extension of England, a fishing station only, not a place to be settled or granted government. Much has been made of the fact that Newfoundland is the only place outside of Europe to have its own name in Irish Gaelic, *Talamh an Éise*, or Land of the Fish. In the early years of settlement, communities around the island kept stronger connections with the region in England or Ireland from whence they had come, than with other settlers in Newfoundland.

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a localized identity began to develop along with the permanent population. An example of this is the establishment of the Newfoundland Natives' Society in 1840 and in 1845 the opening of a Natives' Hall (Lambert 2008a, 21; O'Flaherty 2005, 16). The Society sought to appoint more Newfoundland-born citizens to public office and government, as at the time these positions were filled with English-born and Irish-born leaving locally born residents feeling under-represented and disadvantaged (O'Flaherty 2005, 16-17). In the 1860s there was a campaign in favour of Confederation with Canada. The campaign stirred up nationalist sentiments, particularly amongst the Roman Catholic Irish who depicted the move as a "British invention that would interfere with the development of a unique local culture" (Cadigan 2009, 132). It was during this campaign that many of the famous anti-Confederation songs were penned (Gregory 2004, 4). As O'Flaherty has observed, in 1869, one side projected that, "Newfoundland's union with Canada [would] resemble



Ireland's with Britain and would bring on the same baleful results" (2005, 109). In retrospect, O'Flaherty agreed with this 19<sup>th</sup>-century assessment stating that, "the distant future would show that the analogy to Ireland had at least some 'reason' to it" suggesting that Newfoundland would not be treated well by Canada (ibid., 109).

A local Newfoundland-centred identity began to form in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but during WWI, Newfoundlanders were still decidedly British. Newspapers drew on the fact that Newfoundlanders were still colonial British subjects and in order to be loyal they needed to support the war effort. Bishop-Sterling and Webb have pointed out that in Newfoundland "98.6 per cent of [the] population was native-born" whereas the first response from other countries in the Empire was from first-generation British families (2008, 105). In Newfoundland, an inherent and assumed British-ness needed to be appealed to in order to enlist recruits to defend the mother country. World War I historian Chris Martin, who examined the hindrances to recruitment on the island, stated that it "was not lack of enthusiasm or patriotism" that kept either miners or fishermen from volunteering but the Patriotic Association's indifference to the structure of the outport family, seasonality of work and the distances required to enlist (2009, 75). Historian Patrick Mannion, has examined the reactions in Newfoundland, particularly by those of Irish descent, to the 1916 Irish Easter Rebellion in Dublin, and states that "despite their much-heralded connections to the homeland, the reactions of Catholic Newfoundlanders, who were overwhelmingly of Irish Descent, ... were characterized by a strong loyalty to the British Empire" (2009, 1). He shows that while there was a multi-generational Irish-Newfoundland identity, Irish-Newfoundlanders generally "retained great affinity for Ireland without compromising their loyalty to Britain" (ibid., 12). Even

an observer at the Benevolent Irish Society's (BIS) St. Patrick Day celebrations offered the following:

[The toasts] breathe an intense loyalty to England and to everything English. There is absolutely nothing, save the toast to the memory of St. Patrick, to indicate that the gathering was one of Irishmen celebrating a day that is distinctively a festival of the Irish nation. (ibid., 18)

The most remembered and heralded event of WWI for Newfoundlanders is the devastating battle at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916. As part of "The Big Push" which began with the Battle of the Somme in France, the Newfoundland Regiment suffered the highest percentage per capita of casualties in the war with only 68 soldiers out of almost 800 reporting for roll call the next day. Harding has examined the cultural memory of this event calling it the "Beaumont-Hamel centric Great War myth" (2006, 1). He explains that for the decade immediately following the event the battle was seen as a "heroic national sacrifice," and during the depression it changed into a reminder of Newfoundlanders' strength to pull through hard times (ibid., 7). The mythmakers presented WWI as having "reinforced the country's place within the British Empire and Beaumont-Hamel was identified as the bloody anvil upon which Newfoundland the colony had been forged into Newfoundland the nation" (ibid., 25). Cadigan has stated that the connection to Britain remained important after 1916, but that the Beaumont-Hamel experience gave a new sense of "nationalism" which "overshadowed" Newfoundlanders' British-ness. He asserts that "Newfoundlanders had developed a new sense of national identity as their country seemed to have been baptized in blood at Beaumont-Hamel" (2009, 188). After 1949 and Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, Beaumont-Hamel came to be viewed quite differently. As Harding has stated, it

shifted from an event that was a “cultural symbol of national resistance, unity and accomplishment” to a “painful reminder of an incurable wound suffered by a dead country” (2006, 24).

The compounding effects of the Great Depression with Newfoundland’s depleted coffers and bad credit status, Richard Squires’ recent political disgrace due to financial fraud charges, and London’s reluctance to allow the small country to default either literally or technically led to the Commission of Government in 1934 (Bishop-Sterling and Webb 2008, 115-117; O’Flaherty 2005, 318-375; Rowe 1980, 403). In 1933 a Royal Commission was set up under Lord Amulree (W. W. MacKenzie) to look into the state of Newfoundland and its finances. In the fall of the same year, Amulree provided a report which recommended that the constitution be suspended and Newfoundland be placed under a Commission of Government. Premier Alderdice described it as a “holiday” from democracy, just until Newfoundland was ready to be self-governing again. With that the government voted itself out of existence (O’Flaherty 2005, 408). The commission has been both praised and demonized for its various works and while it did provide progress in education and health care, its economic, employment, poverty relief and industrialization record is mixed (Bishop-Sterling and Webb 2008, 117-119; Cadigan 2009, 209-234).

Despite the short term intentions, the Commission of Government lasted 15 years until Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949. The end result could only be demoralizing. Historian Peter Neary has pointed to the “embarrassment felt by many Newfoundlanders that their country, alone of the Dominions of the British Empire, had failed in its self-government” (1988, 346). Pat Byrne suggests that it was this state of collective

confusion which made Irish-American groups such as the McNulty family, who sung of homeland, so popular (1991, 66-67). The 2003 Royal Commission on *Renewing and Strengthening our Place within Canada* states that:

Our identity and sense of place are, and perhaps have always been, vulnerable. The impact of the loss of responsible government [in 1934] on the young generation of the time has never been fully examined, but it's not difficult to conclude that it must have left a changed self-image, a fear of failure and a loss of confidence. Some argue that we experienced another significant loss in 1949. One expatriate told the Commission, "We have not found that identity in Canada, because our belonging began with a loss of who we were in the moment of Confederation. We are still, I believe, stuck in that moment....The threat of losing ourselves altogether is very real." (V. Young et al. 2003, vi)

In 1946, the National Convention was set up to discuss options for Newfoundland's future. From 1946 to 1948 the debates were broadcast on the radio station VONF (Hiller 1997, np; Rowe 1980, 447). The 45 members were elected from the former 38 electoral districts and were primarily interested in either continuing the Commission of Government or returning to self-government (Hiller 1997, np). There was a small minority who were interested in Confederation with Canada. Joseph R. Smallwood was the most vocal of these and he went on to become the new province's first premier. Smallwood was born in 1900 in Gambo, Newfoundland but grew up in St. John's; he was a journalist and broadcaster before he went into politics. In 1947, the Convention sent two delegations out of Newfoundland, one to Ottawa to discuss terms of union and the other to London to discuss a return to self-governance (ibid.). There were two referendums in 1948. Smallwood's proposal that Confederation with Canada be part of the first referendum was initially defeated by the Convention but the Crown insisted it be included. Several scholars have attributed this to Britain's general global

decolonization pattern and a secret conspiracy between British and Canadian diplomats to sway the hearts and minds of Newfoundlanders which has since been documented (Holland 1998, 141-153; McCann 1998, 154-169; Rowe 1980, 451-452). The first referendum on June 2, 1948 resulted in no clear majority among the three options of Commission, Self-governance or Confederation. The option with the least votes, to continue with the Commission, was dropped for a second ballot (Bishop-Sterling and Webb 2008, 123). A second referendum was scheduled just six weeks later on July 22, 1948 and this campaign was fraught with political, religious, class, regional and social bickering (ibid.). The result of the second vote was a close race of 52.3% for Confederation and 47.6% for a return to Responsible Government (ibid.). The process of moving towards Confederation and the campaigns for and against has been well examined and debated [see *Newfoundland Studies* Vol. 14: 2 (1998)]. Such a close result divided families and communities and can still be felt to some extent today. Newfoundland joined Canada as a province on April 1, 1949 with Smallwood as its first premier.

Confederation did bring many modern advances. However the shine soon wore off for many Newfoundlanders who found that the new big infrastructure projects put the provincial government into debt and did not create as many jobs as hoped. Smallwood held his position as premier from 1949 until 1972 and worked to modernize Newfoundland with roads, resettlement and industry. Cadigan states that:

By 1972, Newfoundland and Labrador had changed. Throughout the province, most residents, with the notable exception of the aboriginal people, took for granted the conveniences of the modern age. Social and educational services were available at unprecedented levels. Improvements in living standards had come at a price. Smallwood dealt dictatorially with the organized labour

movement. Outports had been disturbed by resettlement in the interest of economic modernization, but little had come from this. Overcapacity dominated the fisheries, and growth centres had failed to attract significant new industries. There were new industrial ventures in hydroelectricity and oil processing, but at great cost to government. The government had treated Labrador as a convenience for the island, but Churchill Falls<sup>70</sup> had only provoked popular ire. The province had become dependent on federal financial assistance and management of its key marine resources. Dissatisfaction was building as people became interested in new notions of nation. (2009, 258-259)

Outmigration continued as it had for much of the island's history, but with improved communication and sense of community in the big city of Toronto, nostalgia about the quaintness and appealing anti-modernness of home took hold. As Cadigan states:

Once out-migration to Canada, particularly Toronto, took hold there was a nostalgic romanticism of home intensified, fuelled by television and popular radio stations. From Newfoundland clubs in places such as Toronto, expatriates such as Harry Hibbs sang sadly about the homes they had given up. Much of this nostalgic popular culture painted an overly rosy picture of outport life, but the resentment underlying such nostalgia was very real. A passion developed among many Newfoundlanders living 'away' to return during the summer to visit home and relatives, and the Smallwood government encouraged this even more to promote the tourist industry through 'Come Home Year' 1966. (ibid., 251)

Newfoundlanders became disillusioned with Smallwood and in 1972 chose a new government. Smallwood's reign of over twenty years came to an end. Smallwood was succeeded by Premier Frank Moores and then Brian Peckford. Peckford, elected in 1979, continued to fuel the neo-nationalist movement through his debates with Trudeau on the Canadian constitution. Cadigan, in commenting on Peckford, has the following to say:

the new premier was the archetype of the 'new Newfoundlander' made by, but rebelling against, the government policies of the Smallwood years'...

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<sup>70</sup> Churchill Falls is a large-scale hydro-electric dam in Labrador. A 99-year contract was signed with Quebec in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The deal gives Quebec very low electricity rates, and many Newfoundlanders feel the contract should be renegotiated.

the problem was more than just Smallwood according to Peckford; Newfoundlanders and Labaradorians had not joined Canada in Confederation so much as they had surrendered to it. This surrender was a symptom of a national inferiority complex buried 'deep in our psyche' and flowing 'from our whole history of colonialism, subjugation and exploitation. Newfoundland was frequently a resource base to be exploited for the benefit of the mother country' Peckford's desire to revitalize Newfoundland and Labrador struck a positive chord with a nativist element running through Newfoundland's growing middle class. Anxious about the limited success of modernization and desiring a provincial cultural identity that might simultaneously contain social discontent within and present a united front to forces without, many residents of the province embraced romantic, popular forms that mythologized the best qualities of outport life. (ibid., 266-267)

Overton goes further and connects neo-nationalism with the rise of the middle class in post-Confederation Newfoundland, which fuelled the revival for its own "consumption." He continues to point out that the anti-modernist projection was promoted by "the new urban middle class, a class which, paradoxically, was created by the very process of modernisation that has been (and is) regarded as a threat to the traditional culture" (1979, 299).

Smallwood's detractors felt that he ruled over Newfoundland without consultation and there was very little room for dissent (Crosbie 2008, i). Ray Guy was one of the dissenters and wrote provocative columns about Newfoundland politics from 1963 to 1970 (see Guy 2008 for an edited collection of columns). Ray Guy was also one of the proponents of an anti-modernist view of Newfoundland society. His work sought to root Newfoundland identity and sense of place in the life of the outport with a perception that rural life represented a space in which one was rewarded through hard work. Fowler stated, "Guy became the popular voice for those who saw a reclamation of the past as a foundation for the future" (2002, 160). Fowler contends that "no one expressed more eloquently, or immediately or more popularly the anguish and the outrage of cultural

dislocation that reached the breaking point in Newfoundland in the late 1960s” (ibid., 159). Pat Byrne feels that in Ray Guy’s writing there is a “sense of sadness, sometimes bordering on outrage, over opportunities lost and potential unrealized that made it almost a diary of the disappointments arising out of the unfulfilled hopes of the Smallwood era” (1994, 384). Smallwood’s major industrialization effort “had failed not only from an economic point of view, it had also created great social upheaval and projected a future for Newfoundland premised upon a wholesale rejection of the past” (Fowler 2002, 317). As David Bradley explained, during the Smallwood era “economic change was tied to the abandonment of nationhood; brighter prospects went hand-in-hand with a sense of loss” (2003, 41). The backlash against this rejection of the past might seem rather ironic. The tactic was to embrace, romanticize and re-cast the pre-resettlement outport life as “traditional.” This re-casting was accomplished primarily through the arts which focused on the expressive culture of the past. The timing of this shift in perspective was not only local but corresponded with a “global trend to revalue the worth of small-scale societies” which “supplied an external theoretical framework for a critique of strategies of industrialization and resettlement” (Fowler 2002, 318).

A vision of Newfoundlanders as hearty, simple hard-working people was not new. Pat Byrne has demonstrated that there is a “longstanding Newfoundland regional mythology” which developed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century from “1811 [to] 1911, although it drew on pre-1811 sources and continues in different guises, to the present day” (1998, 59-60). This mythology paints Newfoundlanders as “unique” with a strength of character anyone would admire, the type of men who were inventive, competent, willing to help those in need and generous, with a love of land and sea (ibid., 60). As McGrath stated in



1904, the Newfoundlander placed “fishing above all callings, for the love of it is implanted in them” (McGrath 1904 quoted in P. Byrne 1998, 60). Perhaps it was this sort of attitude which led to the 1960s licence plates and branding of Newfoundland as “Canada’s Happy Province” that gave the impression that Newfoundlanders were “too stupid and too backward to realize just how badly off they really were” (P. Byrne 1998, 73).

Just as there is a positive, if condescending and essentialized view of Newfoundlanders, there is a negative one which Byrne traces to the same politicians and pamphleteers who developed the positive image. In order to find support for financial assistance or political/social reform they proposed that the Newfoundlander was a

barely civilized half-brute who had been beaten into submission and stupefaction not by magic but by centuries of neglect, oppression and ceaseless, grinding poverty- conditions which were exacerbated by the capricious sea, the unproductive soil, and the intolerable climate. (ibid., 62)

Byrne projects that it was this image of Newfoundlanders which led Amulree to suggest suspending the constitution and adopting the Commission of Government (ibid., 63).

Part of Amulree’s justification was that the people were easily influenced due to their “child-like simplicity,” “unprogressive” ways and “general degeneration” due to close marriages and disease in the outports (O’Flaherty 2005, 403).

Margaret Conrad has pointed out that these negative stereotypes “re-emerged with a vengeance” in the late 1990s and early 2000s with “smear tactics that would be unacceptable if all people in the region had a different skin colour, or shared a common physical handicap” (2002, 163). As recently as December 2009, a letter to the editor appeared in the free downtown St. John’s newspaper *The Scope* which sought to “warn

others” about the “culture of thievery and gossip” and that Newfoundlanders are “ignorant, lazy and lack in honesty.” The writer, only identified as Jeff, was disappointed that his experience was “different than the tourist brochures tell you” (Jeff [?] 2009, 3). More famously, was Margaret Wente’s column in the national newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, in which she referred to Premier Danny Williams as “a deadbeat brother-in-law” and the province as the “most vast and scenic welfare ghetto in the world” (2005, A19).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is foregrounding the questions of Newfoundland identity and construction of place in scholarly and governmental interests. In March 2002, the Newfoundland Historical Society held a symposium entitled *The Idea of Newfoundland: Nationalism, Identity and Culture from the 19th-century to the Present*. In 2003 the *Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada* presented its findings which generally concluded that while Newfoundlanders do not intend to separate from Canada, they do seek a better relationship within the federation. In 2003, David Bradley presented to the *Commission* and stated that he believed Newfoundlanders suffer from a “crisis in confidence fostered by an unhealthy case of wilted identity” (2003, 40). Bradley contends that, although “proud and hardy Newfoundlanders wear their identity on their sleeve” and they constitute Canada’s second “distinct society,” under the bravado there is a destructive self-hatred and expectation of disappointment (ibid.). How this can be remedied is a complex equation which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, I believe that by recognizing how parts of the Newfoundland musical identity is constructed, through both history and mass media, Newfoundlanders will come to a greater understanding of their place in the world.

### 3.6 Conclusions

In her introduction to the special Newfoundland issue of the *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* Farquharson asks “How Irish is Newfoundland?”

The question of Newfoundland’s Irishness inevitably produces one of two all too easy answers. Either there is some innate, unidentifiable connection that one intuits or simply “feels deeply” or the Irishness of Newfoundland is clearly manufactured by well-oiled tourism and cultural heritage campaigns with political and economic agendas. (2008, 10)

I agree with Farquharson that neither of these standard answers is satisfactory nor is either completely wrong or fully correct. I do agree that great portions of the Irish cultural identity recently espoused are constructed in that they are privileged and inflated in everyday discourse about Newfoundland culture; but I also believe that similarity in the colonial and post-colonial experiences of the two Islands means that Irish people feel an empathy with Newfoundlanders who are still discovering their place within Canada. I would suggest that one facet of finding an identity to trust has been to examine our history and to explore how the Irish have been used as a suitable cultural model to emulate. There are strong arguments for historical connection and certainly Irish folk customs are still present in Newfoundland (see Casey 1986). How does an Irish-Newfoundland identity and a sense, or senses of place function today? It would seem that there is an undercurrent of understanding that Newfoundlanders are culturally Irish, like Cape Bretoners are perceived as culturally Scottish, while ignoring other ancestral roots from the Acadians, Mik’maq, French, Scottish, and English. Factors such as last names and accents which harken back to Ireland, the drinking culture, the friendliness, the music, dancing and similarity of stereotypes all contribute to this latent acceptance.

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the Irish themselves seem happy to accept us into their global diaspora, as one of the forgotten enclaves of their history. The island where “three centuries after the first settlements of Irish immigrants in Newfoundland, there is still a sizable Irish population, complete with Irish surnames like Power, Walsh and Foley, and Waterford accents that have defied the march of time” (Ó’hAllmhuráin 2008, 35). This dissertation discusses and nuances some of today’s unquestioned musical assumptions by examining Irish musicians who came to Newfoundland and had a profound impact on our musical senses of place.

To emulate Ireland’s Celtic Tiger of the 1990s and early 2000s is one of Newfoundland’s dreams. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Irish were stereotyped as the lazy, unemployed, uneducated and disrespected poor cousins of the English, who danced and fiddled their way out of their quaint villages and seemingly overcame all obstacles to become an independent country with a strong economy, known as the Celtic Tiger at the millennium. While the Tiger is now lying down for a nap, Newfoundland still hopes to follow in their Irish cousins’ paw prints and soar on oil money and keep the long awaited economic “have” status.

**Chapter Four:**  
***The Role of Mass Media and Revivals  
in Newfoundland and Irish Musics***

***4.1 Introduction***

This chapter outlines the state of Newfoundland music scholarship and considers the role of electronic media and Irish revivals in the Newfoundland context. The three case studies in this dissertation, the McNulty Family, Ryan's Fancy and Séamus Creagh's *Island to Island* CD occurred during the three major Irish and North American folk music revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, it is crucial to briefly outline the international Irish music revivals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter is conceived in four sections: 1) a brief history of music in Newfoundland from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; 2) an examination of Newfoundland music scholarship; 3) the role of electronic mass media in transmitting Newfoundland musics during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and 4) a brief discussion of the three periods of Irish revival in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This chapter provides a balance of literature review with background information which is crucial to the understanding of the case studies.

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<sup>71</sup> The first two periods of Irish influence were defined by Pat Byrne (1991) and my research in Chapter Seven has revealed another period in the 1990s and 2000s.

## ***4.2 A Brief History of Musics in Newfoundland***

The following sections will examine the various musics which were a part of the Newfoundland musical experience for residents in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These will include classical musics, church musics and traditional musics. There is also a brief history of the rise of the accordion and its arrival in Newfoundland.

### ***4.2.1 Popular and Classical Music in Pre-Confederation Newfoundland***

Entertainment in pre-Confederation Newfoundland was not limited to the dancing, fiddling and singing upon which ethnographic scholarship has focused. The island and Labrador were reasonably cosmopolitan, receiving popular and classical musics from Europe and the United States. The province is well-known for its choral traditions which stemmed from both church and schools.<sup>72</sup> I offer this short section to show the reader some of the breadth of music available in Newfoundland during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that is rarely referenced in folklore or ethnomusicological studies of the island.

Paul Woodford has been the lead scholar examining notated music from the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to Confederation. His research primarily follows the development of the church, military, and school musics. According to Woodford, the early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a ripening of musical culture in St. John's and around the island:

Musically speaking, Newfoundland enjoyed an advantage in the nineteenth century of being near the international shipping lanes between North America and Europe, as well as being a colony of the British Empire, and thus it was fairly common to see British and American Ships in St. John's harbour. Some of those ships had their own bands for the purpose of entertaining passengers or crew and

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<sup>72</sup> Tom Gordon has been researching the Moravian and Inuit choral traditions in Maakovik, Labrador (Gordon 2007).

upon arrival in port they would participate in local celebrations and events. (1988, 109)

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a lot of music and theatre in St. John's pubs. There were advertisements for music teachers, pianos, chromatic flutes, brass and woodwind bands, and for musical scores. The first opera in St. John's was performed in May of 1820 and a Handel and Haydn Society formed in the 1830s (ibid., 21-30). I discovered the following ad for J. F. Chisholm in the February 6, 1864 edition of *The Daybook* a St. John's daily newspaper; the ad illustrates the wide variety of music available:

New Music Just Received at the British and American Bookstore. A Large and Varied Assortment of New and Popular Music, Consisting of Some of the Newest Songs, Polka, Waltzs [sic], Quadrills [sic], Schottishess, Galops, Marches, Rondos, Fantasias, Operatic Airs, Variations Easy Moderate and Difficult, Instrumental and Vocal Duets, Etcetera. Will Sell Low for Cash.

The wide variety of options included:

*Moore's Irish Melodies; Handle's [sic] Sacred Oratorio The Messiah by Vincent Novello; The Golden Harp: Hymns Tunes and Choruses for Sabbath [sic] Schools; Melodian without a Master; and The Hiberioia Collection 200 Irish Jiggs, Reels, Hornpipes, Songs, Dances Etcetera For the Violin, Flute, Cornet, Clarionett [sic]. (Daybook 1864, np)*<sup>73</sup>

Sea songs and parlour music were also popular in the first half of the century (Woodford 1988, 24). All of this and more led Rev. W. J. Hyde to condemn the entire island as "a very sinful place, for Sabbaths as well as other days and nights, [there is] nothing but dancing, fiddling and singing" (ibid., 25). The "Banks of Newfoundland"

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<sup>73</sup> Un-authored news articles and advertisements will be listed by their publishing news source. Page numbers are provided whenever possible; however for international and historical publications a page number is not always available. In this case, np will be added to the in-text citation and the website from which it was access will be provided in the bibliography. Reference to 19<sup>th</sup>-century newspaper advertisements were found on the website *Atlantic Canada Newspaper Survey* (Canadian Heritage 2002, np).

was composed by Francis Forbes around 1820. This song has, according to musicologist Glenn Colton, “achieved iconic status within a collective national consciousness” of Newfoundland (2007, 9). Colton claims that it has been equated with a sense of pride in Newfoundland since its composition (ibid.). St. John’s balladeer Johnny Burke (1851-1930) worked and composed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and wrote a variety of popular musics including ballads and humorous ditties on broadsides, operas and comic musical theatre (Hiscock 1997, 23-24; Mercer 1979, 29). Many of his works are filled with local insider jokes, usually for a St John’s audience, and Taft has referred to him as “the most important figure of his day in Newfoundland popular music” (1990, 56).<sup>74</sup> Folklorist P. M. St. Pierre explains that Burke often worked within the popular style of Irish comic music hall songs and used those melodies for his lyrics (1995, np).

The latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued to see the popularity of brass bands and the rise of string orchestras. Apparently violin and flute were amongst the most common instruments (Woodford 1988, 110). String orchestras were founded in King’s Cove, Harbour Grace, Makkovik and St. John’s amongst others, and schools in Placentia offered string lessons (Gordon 2007, 310; Woodford, 33, 45, 55, 110-111). Brass bands continued their popularity throughout Newfoundland in the early twentieth century, and were usually connected to a church or fraternal organization such as the Star of the Sea or an Orange Lodge (Woodford 1988, 183). String orchestras, including a Ladies’ Orchestra which featured violins, banjos, mandolins and guitars, continued to be fashionable in St. John’s (ibid., 191). In 1861, local classical composer and musician

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<sup>74</sup> Please refer to *John White’s Collection of Johnny Burke Songs* for examples of Burke’s lyrics (Kirwin 1982).



William Stacey wrote the “Newfoundland Volunteer’s Band March” which gained great popularity and was reprinted in 1906 by Charles Hutton of Hutton’s Music on Water Street (Canadian Musical Heritage Society 2003, np). Locally produced operettas were common but these eventually faded. In St. Lawrence, PB the operetta performances were not reinstated after the 1929 tidal wave but did continue in Conception Harbour, CB into the 1930s and 1940s (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 73-45; Woodford 1988, 186).<sup>75</sup>

Newfoundland was a musical place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but according to Woodford cultural activity of all kinds gradually declined throughout the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1988, 183, 201). This “musical decline” was due to a myriad of factors, primarily economic. Woodford claims that as Newfoundland lost its economic independence and the “dream of an independent country” slipped away, it affected the musicians not only financially, but creatively:

Patriotism had been a strong stimulus to [Newfoundland] musicians, especially [Newfoundland] composers and it seems more than coincidental that there was more music making, and indeed composing going on during the 1880’s through to World War I, when Newfoundland was at its peak as an independent political entity than at any other time in its history, before or after. (ibid., 200)

While I do not have evidence to the contrary, I wonder if this is entirely the case. It was during these decades of “decline” that radio began broadcasting in Newfoundland so perhaps it was a shift rather than a decline. We know from Narváez, Webb and Hiscock’s work on early Newfoundland radio that it was quite vibrant and varied

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<sup>75</sup> In the case of interviews from archival collections, such as those from MUNFLA, the in-text citation lists the collector name and accession number. For direct quotes from the interviewee, his or her name will be provided in the surrounding text. The reader may find the collection under the collectors’ name in the bibliography. All other interviews are listed under the interviewee’s name. Archival materials are listed in Appendix Eleven.

(Hiscock 1987, 1994; Narváez 1986; Webb 1994, 2008a, 2008b). It is possible that in a depressed economic period there was less demand for live music requiring ticket purchases and fewer advertisements. There is also the viewpoint the radio suppressed the “creative effort” of the population (Webb 2008a, 120). This opinion was expressed in an editorial which appeared on January 16, 1932 in the *Daily News* (ibid.).

In some ways, World War II was kind to Newfoundland in that it brought an economic upturn and much needed post-Depression employment. During the war, thousands of American and Canadian soldiers moved to the strategically situated island. With these soldiers came the need to entertain them and the theatres and music halls became active once again with big names brought in to perform (Woodford 1988, 225). Many of the soldiers were musicians themselves and their concert bands brought new music to the ears of residents. As discussed in Chapter Five, it was during WWII that the Irish-American group the McNulty Family became popular on Newfoundland radio and through the mail order service of The Big 6 store. The McNulty Family’s music was just one of many different types introduced during the war period but one that made a deep impression upon Newfoundlanders.

Certainly the musical influence from the “friendly invasion” of Canadian and American troops made an impact during WWII and in the following decades. The Americans in particular were prominent in eastern Newfoundland from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s.<sup>76</sup> Their radio programs and USO concerts brought new musics and musicians, including Frank Sinatra, to the island (ibid.). American musics became quite popular and as the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website states the “more

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<sup>76</sup> The final US troops left the Argentia base on Placentia Bay in the 1990s.

profound and far-reaching significance” of the bases “was the wartime exposure of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to North American culture. This not only helped shift the country’s society away from Britain and towards its western neighbours, but helped lay the foundation for Confederation with Canada” (Higgins 2007, np). At the same time that Americans were becoming a part of various communities, radio and recordings were more widely available and younger musicians began to move away from the solo tradition and towards an ensemble paradigm. At first, there was a mixing of the set dance and social dance traditions but they gradually grew apart.<sup>77</sup> For example, Ned Miffen from Catalina, Trinity Bay, used to borrow microphones and PA systems for dances from the Bonavista base and Ray Walsh’s band in the sixties alternated Newfoundland dance music with popular musics of the day which allowed for square set and couple dancing (Miffen 2002; R. Walsh 2008).

#### ***4.2.2 Traditional Dance Music***

Many cosmopolitan musics were available throughout the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Until the mid-twentieth century the main performance context for Newfoundland dance music was the “time,” consisting of a dinner and dance, usually organized by a church group or Lodge as a benefit.<sup>78</sup> There were other sorts of informal “times” also held in private homes, fishing sheds called “stores” or “rooms” and

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<sup>77</sup>Eventually the community-based set dance tradition faded due to resettlement, outmigration and new modes of electronic entertainments. Set dances now exist primarily in a revivalist mode with renewed interest particularly in the past five years. DanceNL was formed in 2010 to promote and preserve all forms of dance in Newfoundland. For more information consult their website (DanceNL 2012, np).

<sup>78</sup> This is not to say these were the only entertainment. There were many other forms including variety concerts, brass bands, house parties, mummering and informal dances in other venues as well as storytelling and singing.

sometimes on bridges (Quigley 1985, 75-77, 82-86; Wareham 1982, 24). These “times” were usually held during the winter; however, summer garden parties or special events and holidays were also marked with a dance. The dances usually encompassed a number of surrounding communities and dancers travelled by foot or boat, later car, to attend the events. The standard format for a Newfoundland dance or “time,” was a dinner cooked by a local ladies group, followed by a dance starting at about nine p.m. which continued late into the night, or even dawn the next day.

Due to the fact that Newfoundlanders were tied to a natural-resources-based economy, both work and social entertainments were seasonal. As the summer was busy with tasks related to fishing, most “times” occurred in the fall and winter. A solo “fiddler” was employed for the evening, but other local musicians were expected to “spell,” or relieve him, during breaks. The musician was hired from the surrounding region and often walked several kilometres to the event. During the 1940s and 1950s, payments ranged between two and five dollars; however many fiddlers volunteered their services. The majority of dances were square sets, with some circle dances, waltzes and solo male step dancing.<sup>79</sup>

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a shift from the violin towards accordion for dance accompaniment; the accordion was louder, easier to learn and did not go out of tune in a variable climate. There were also a small number of mouth organ or harmonica players in the province. Sometimes the tunes were sung in vocables when a

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<sup>79</sup> This information comes from my fieldwork conducted since 2000.

fiddler was not available. This vocal style, is known as mouth, chin, or gob music.<sup>80</sup>

Very often, the singer started with a tune rhyme or short verse before continuing with vocables known as “diddling.” In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century traditional music expanded from rural to urban contexts. The breadth of instrumentation used on the island to play dance music also expanded with the influence of visiting musicians and recordings from Ireland, the UK and North America. Bouzouki, guitar, bodhran, banjo, tin whistle, Irish flute and Irish pipes are now common amongst the musicians who participate in Irish style pub sessions in St. John’s. These instruments were not used during the formal “times” era but were introduced through the 1970s revival period in which many Irish musicians visited and moved to the Island.

As discussed earlier, the usual method of learning fiddle or accordion in Newfoundland was similar to other parts of Canada. For example, Garrison states that in Cape Breton when a young child, usually a boy between eight and twelve years old, showed interest in learning an instrument, he was given basic instruction by an adult or learned to play secretly by observation (1985, 71-72). In some instances, “practice” violins were used. Such was the case with Emile Benoit who learned the basics of bowing and posture on a toy violin his father fashioned for him (Quigley 1995, 8-10). In outport Newfoundland the violin was often stored behind the wood stove for safe keeping and was transported in a bag rather than a hard modern case (Osborne 2003, 129). This sort of treatment often resulted in substantial damage from the dry heat of the stove and the fragility of the bag.

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<sup>80</sup> While I learned of this vocal style through my general field work, Wareham also mentions it in his dissertation about Harbour Buffett (1982, 208-209).

Musical education is now changing in Newfoundland and Labrador and private or group lessons are common, particularly in larger centres.<sup>81</sup> Traditional musical instruments and forms, particularly accordion, are becoming popular again in recent decades and there are a growing number of young players. The government has facilitated music classes within the school system and Memorial University of Newfoundland's School of Music now offers courses in fiddle, accordion and singing.

#### ***4.2.3 We're all Fiddling Around: Fiddle vs. Accordion and Other Traditional Instrumentalists***

Prior to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when community set dances were common in rural Newfoundland, any dance musician regardless of instrument was referred to as the "fiddler."<sup>82</sup> I use this emic terminology and will include accordionists and other instrumentalist in the term "fiddler" when speaking in general. For example, in my research I have spoken to violin players, accordionists, mandolinists, guitarists, mouth organ players, pipers, flutists and others. When speaking about a particular musician I will specify their primary instrument. The fact that the accordion and fiddle have fulfilled the same cultural-musical role is noted in other research as well. For example, the *Bellows and Bows: Historic Recordings of Canadian Fiddle and Accordion Music* CD highlights dance musicians from across the country (S. Johnson 2012).

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<sup>81</sup> The Suzuki Talent Education Program (STEP) has been offering a fiddle class to its students since 1982 taught by Christina Smith. Fergus O'Byrne has headed up the Young Folk at the Hall program which happens once or twice a year. The Vinland Music Camp on the Northern Peninsula is a week-long traditional music camp in August.

<sup>82</sup> I learned this term through my general fieldwork since 2000, however Wareham also notes this in his dissertation about Placentia Bay party traditions (1982, 174).

#### ***4.2.4 A Brief History of Accordions***

Accordions are well-loved in Newfoundland. In fact, in 2005 Newfoundlanders broke the Guinness Book of World Record for the “Largest Accordion Ensemble.” Nicknamed “The Accordion Revolution,” over 989 accordionists gathered in a city park to play “Mussels in the Corner” continuously for five minutes (Best 2006, 1; CBC 2005, np).<sup>83</sup> Many provincial tourism advertisements feature the accordion prominently. The button accordion has been cast as the dominant instrument, far more so than the fiddle, in the marketing of Newfoundland culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although I’ve discussed the role of the “fiddler” or dance musician, I’ve said very little about actual accordions. Despite filling the same role as a dance instrument the accordion differs from the violin in many obvious technological manners but also in terms of how it is valued in terms of class distinctions.

The accordion was invented in 1829 in Germany, with almost simultaneous Viennese and British patents (Eydmann 1999, 596; S. Johnson 2012). Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the accordion went through many innovations and experimentations. The first accordions were quite small, almost palm sized, with separate large bellows meant to be used by the solo travelling musician (Jacobson 2007, 217). Various types of accordions with many names such as the “Symphonium,” the “Demian,” and the “Flautina” proliferated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Eydmann 1999, 596; Jacobson 2007, 217). In both the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the rhetoric of accordion manufacturers was of “innovation.” Constant improvements were made to make the instrument respond quickly and increase its versatility. One of the major innovations in accordion

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<sup>83</sup> Unofficially another 100 or so players came late to break the one thousand mark.

technology was put forth in 1850 by Walter who designed an instrument with three diatonic rows of buttons which together created a “forty-six-note fully chromatic scale” with “double action” (Jacobson 2007, 218). This meant that the pitch did not change with bellows direction. The diatonic accordions are known as “single action” and each button creates two pitches, one each on the draw and push of the bellows. In early to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century America, the accordion was associated with innovation and marketed alongside other technological advances such as clocks, cars or televisions.<sup>84</sup>

There are two types of accordions – the button accordion (which has many variations in design and tuning) and the piano accordion. The piano accordion is used by classical players and is unusual in Newfoundland or Labrador. The piano accordion is much larger with full-sized piano keys and bass buttons for single notes, triads, and seventh chords. The button accordion has rows of buttons on both the melody and bass sides and comes in both diatonic and chromatic versions. The diatonic button accordion, or melodeon, is the most prominent accordion in Newfoundland although the chromatic button accordion is gaining popularity in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Very few piano accordions have been used by prominent players in the province; a notable exception was Ray Walsh who played one on the television show *All Around the Circle*. Jacobson explains that in 1920s America the two types were distinguished by ethnic monikers, the Viennese or button accordion and the Italian or piano accordion (2007, 219, 228). By 1938, the term accordion came to refer only to the piano accordion in the US, due to its hegemony in that country and by 1950, 95% of all accordions sold in the United States

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<sup>84</sup> For a detailed discussion of accordion marketing in the United States please see Jacobson 2007, 218-222. Two full-length books regarding the accordion in the Americas have recently been published, please see Jacobson 2012 and Simonett 2012.



were imported from Italy (*ibid.*, 219). In Newfoundland, an accordion is assumed to be a button accordion.

The accordion became popular quite quickly after its invention and was distributed around the world. The accordion swiftly became known in Scotland as lessons were being offered in Aberdeen by the 1830s (Alburger 1983, 196). Accordions were first imported into the southern United States and Louisiana in the 1840s but did not become a big part of the Cajun tradition until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (DeWitt 2003, 307). The first accordions in central Canada were noted in Quebec in 1843 and were purchased by the Ursuline nuns in Quebec City who ordered five more between 1846 and 1853 (S. Johnson 2012, 4-5). The 10-button single-row melodeon was popular in Ireland by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was taken up by iconic players such as John Kimmel, Peter Conlon, Frank Quinn, Joseph Flanagan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (G. Smith 1997, 435). Piano accordions were not advertised in Canada until the 1930s and then marketed primarily to women (S. Johnson 2012, 7). Ethnomusicologist Sherry Johnson has given a short but detailed account of the catalogue marketing of accordions in Canada through Eaton's in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (*ibid.*, 6-7).

With the advent of newspapers in Newfoundland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first commercial mentions of violins and accordions can be tracked (Canadian Heritage 2002, np). I will compare the commercial appearance of violins and accordions in Newfoundland. One may surmise that violins were available prior to the offering of lessons as the modern instrument was developed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Italy. In fact, in 1766 there was at least one notable fiddler in St. John's by the name of Richard Doyle (C. Byrne 1992, 364). B. Foley's advertisement for his new music school

in St. John's appeared on February 17, 1814 and it gives an insight into the instruments already present in the city for which he expected to find students:

B. Foley respectfully informs the young ladies and gentlemen of St. John's that he has commenced school for the instruction of music. Musicians, for private balls, on the shortest notice, and most reasonable terms. Teaching, the polite accomplishment of music, comprising octavo and concert flutes, fiddle, dulcimer, piano-forte, union pipes, etcetera, terms made known at the school (*Royal Gazette and Newfoundland Advertiser* 1814, np).

We know certainly that at least three violins were in the possession of the late Neil Shannon when his assets were auctioned off on January 8, 1819 (*Newfoundland Mercantile Journal* 1819b, np). Later that year, violins were being sold by John Stentaforde along with flutes, fifes, cellos and instruction books for tenor-viol among other instruments (*Newfoundland Mercantile Journal* 1819a, np). In comparison, the first record of a violin being sold in Atlantic Canada was in 1804 in Saint John, New Brunswick (*Saint John Gazette and General Advertiser*, np).

The first accordions in Atlantic Canada were received in 1842 from the vessel *Edwin* of London in New Brunswick which included accordions with "10 to 21 keys" from the firm of Messrs Broadwood and Sons (*New Brunswick Courier* 1842, np). The first accordion in Newfoundland was marketed in 1845<sup>85</sup> through a Conception Bay newspaper along with "flutes; violins; fifes; clarionets; strings; violin; accordians; harps eolian" (*Weekly Herald and Conception Bay Advertiser*, np). By 1850 accordion lessons and instrument repair were being offered by J. F. Meyers from the Kielty's Hotel (*Times* 1850, np). In 1852, J. F. Meyers had started selling accordions and flutinas priced from one to four pounds and ten shillings (*Newfoundland Express* 1852, np). In 1851, there

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<sup>85</sup> There is a possibility that these were available since Nov 20, 1844 as the cataloguer from the Atlantic Canada Newspaper survey noted that date on the bottom of the advertisement (Canadian Heritage 2002).

were several auctions from businesses such as the American Bookstore and M'Coubrey and Finn which included accordions, the latter of which had two dozen of the instruments (*Times* 1851a, np; 1851b, np). By 1863, J. J. Coleman was making a living “tuning and repairing pianos, harmoniums, melodeons, accordions, concertenos [*sic*] and organs” (*Daybook* 1863, np).<sup>86</sup> Clearly, the accordion was becoming popular in Newfoundland in late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The humble accordion has not always gotten the respect it perhaps deserves considering its popularity. There is a joke which goes something like this:

Q: What is the definition of a gentleman?

A: A gentleman is a man who knows *how* to play the accordion but does not.<sup>87</sup>

An examination of the accordion's history shows that there is some truth in this joke.

Although marketed originally as a leisure-class instrument for genteel women it eventually became associated with the working class (Eydmann 1999, 597-598; Jacobson 2007, 220-221). There is an attitude which looks down on accordions as lesser instruments next to violins which have a long history of hand-made craftsmanship, high art compositions and antecedents in the Middle East and India and bowing in Central Asia.<sup>88</sup> In comparison, the accordion is a product of the industrial revolution. Although the best are hand-made, the invention of the accordion is connected to manufacturing and it was a new instrument with no history in the high art classical tradition until the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Around the early 1860s there are many ads for melodeons from New York. At first I was quite excited as the German single row button accordion is often referred to as a melodeon, but then I realized that the ads were referring to a precursor of the pump organ which was also called a melodeon.

<sup>87</sup> I believe I heard this in my family in which there are fiddle players but few accordionists. This joke has also been told about other instruments, particularly reed instruments including the bagpipes and uilleann pipes. For more about accordion jokes see March 2012.

<sup>88</sup> For a history of the violin in Southern India and the origins of bowing please see (Raghavan 1957; Vedavalli 1978).

century. Edymann attributes some of the disregard for accordions in Scotland to the fact that the accordion appeared just at the end of the “Golden Age” of fiddling during a period when new influences were seen as diluting or polluting factors for the purer and older tradition (1999, 595). For example, Francis Collinson who published *The Traditional and National Music of Scotland* (1966) ignored accordions completely despite their being as “common as blackberries” (Eydmann 1999, 595). Snyder explains that, in an interview with Alan Lomax in 1988, Lomax admitted that many professional scholars have deliberately ignored the accordion as it was perceived as having taken over the role of instruments such as fiddle and bagpipes (1997, 39).<sup>89</sup> While not as much scholarly attention has been focused on the accordion, as say the fiddle, there are still a number of regional studies which either privilege the accordion or at least take it into account. These studies represent many parts of the world including various regions and diasporas of North America, Europe and the British Isles, Asia and Australia.<sup>90</sup>

In his article, “Country Music in Diffusion” folklorist Peter Narváez discussed how the accordion was considered by Newfoundland audiences to be an essential part of any country band in the 1940s and 1950s (2012, 270). Ethnomusicologist Kelly Best suggested that the accordion and particularly its synthesis with country and western

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<sup>89</sup> Accordions are not the only new free-reed instrument to come under fire for being useful and popular but “inauthentic.” In India the harmonium became extremely popular as an easy and reasonably affordable accompaniment instrument used by singers, but was banned by All-India radio as it was considered unsuitable to classical Hindustani music with the official reason cited as its inability to produce microtones (Jairazbhoy 1971; Kaufman 1968; Nueman 1977; Vedavalli 1978).

<sup>90</sup> (Please refer to: Alburger 1983, (Scotland); Bell 1987a, 1978b (Canadian Survey); Best 2006, (Newfoundland); Brunskill 1990, (Northwest Territories); DeWitt 2003, (Cajun); Fairbairn 1994, (Ireland); L. Hart and Sandell 2001, (Quebec); Hiscott 2000, (Inuit); S. Johnson 2012, (Canadian Survey); Kaeppler 2001, (Oceania); Keil 1982, (Slovenia and Milwaukee); Kwan 2004, (China); MacAoidh 1994, (Ireland); McCullough 1977, (Ireland); Sarkissian 2000, (Malaysian-Portuguese); G. Smith 1997, (Ireland); Snyder 1994, (African American); 1997, (Mississippi)).

music<sup>91</sup> have created a backlash by many Newfoundland musicians seeking a more “authentic” version of the tradition (2006, 7). Often the accordion accompanies songs in this style, and as Best states, some musicians feel that it has:

contaminated the music by mixing it with popular American forms. They appear to see these songs as the sonic equivalent of a bad “Newfie” joke. Perhaps, the sound of an accordion came to represent, for some purists, support of a distasteful stereotype. (ibid.)

In England, the accordion was demarcated from the concertina by appropriate performance venues. Whereas the concertina which was considered suitable for concerts, the accordion was considered a private instrument to be played only at home (Eydmann 1999, 596). This may have been in part due to the fact the accordion was first marketed to middle and upper class women as a genteel instrument, akin to the harp or guitar, which were more suitable than an ungainly instrument such as the violin (ibid., 597-598). In the United States, accordion advertisements were also aimed at middle class women and children by offering smaller, lighter, “slim” accordions in a variety of colours (Jacobson 2007, 219-222). By the 1860s in Scotland, German melodeons had entered the market and prices had started to drop at which point the rural working classes took up the instrument (Eydmann 1999, 601). The melodeon was particularly maligned and kept out of the standardization of Scottish folk music in the 1930s whereas “modern” and “serious” accordions such as the chromatic button and piano accordions were given parts in contemporary Scottish country dance bands (ibid., 605). While the melodeon was relegated to the working class and rural peoples there was a campaign in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century to legitimize the piano accordion in North America so it could join the western

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<sup>91</sup> Particularly with added bass and drum machine or drum kit.

classical music canon. The piano accordion was favourably compared with the piano and suggestions were made that the accordion improved upon the piano in sustained tones. Teachers were encouraged to teach classical repertoire and composers were commissioned to write for the instrument (Jacobson 2007, 221-227).

In Newfoundland, however, the older style of diatonic melodeon playing remained strong in the dance tradition and was reinforced by popular radio performers such as “Ma” McNulty. The new chromatic style, described by Smith (1997), which became popular in Ireland in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, is only starting to become more prominent in the province in the past few decades as exchanges with Irish musicians become more frequent and a desire to learn from modern Irish style recordings becomes stronger.

#### ***4.3 Newfoundland Music Scholarship***

The following sections will provide a brief literature review of relevant Newfoundland music scholarship with a particular emphasis on the traditional instrumental research to date. As Newfoundland folksong scholarship is vast I will not attempt to address it all but will discuss the major collections and collectors.

#### ***4.3.1 Newfoundland General Music Scholarship***

In 1968 the Folklore Department, founded by Herbert Halpert, was opened at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN).<sup>92</sup> The advent of the department and its focus on the cultural traditions of Newfoundland was one of several initiatives during the 1960s which supported provincial based research. Sociologist James Overton, has referred to the collective approach of the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), the Memorial University Extension Service and folklore studies as the “Newfoundland school” of research. According to Overton, this school of thought promoted “small is beautiful” and “academic regionalism” paradigms (1988, 8). A full school of thought is perhaps an overstatement and generalization as scholars had their own unique methodology to Newfoundland research, and the faculty did not actively subscribe to a single theoretical approach. There were however, concerted efforts within ISER, the English and Folklore Departments to complete local in-depth community studies, of which Dr. Herbert Halpert, was a central proponent (Guigné 2008a, 49). Much of this study of Newfoundland was encouraged by the Smallwood government which in turn, came “under scrutiny” by the researchers (ibid). Halpert and colleagues encouraged students to do their own primary folklore research, often in their own hometowns, and this has resulted in thousands of entries in MUNFLA. With many notable exceptions,<sup>93</sup> it can appear that the majority of work on Newfoundland music has focused on the non-

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<sup>92</sup> It is one of two graduate schools in folklore in Canada. The other is at Laval University in Quebec. The ethnomusicology graduate program opened at Memorial in 2005 and is overseen by an interdisciplinary committee with representatives from music and folklore.

<sup>93</sup> Such as the work on Figgy Duff by Saugeres (1991); Don Messer, revival and country music by Rosenberg (1986, 1993b, 1994b, 1996, 202b, 2007); Ingrid Fraser’s thesis on musicians occupational folklife (1981); early Newfoundland radio by Hiscock (1984, 1987, 1994); and the Newfoundland Popular Music Project by Posen and Taft (1973, 1975). This is a small portion of a much longer list.

commercial community traditions of folksong and more recently instrumental dance music.

Commercialized forms of Newfoundland music and influential electronic mass media sources have also been part of the research on Newfoundland music. Moore's and Narváez's separate works on Great Big Sea,<sup>94</sup> Flynn's examination of the career of television and radio fiddler, Don Randell, and my own article on the influence of radio and recordings on the repertoire of musicians have recently considered how musicians negotiate multiple mass media and repertoires (Flynn 2007; Moore 2002; Narváez 2007; Osborne 2007). This dissertation extends these studies by examining how three groups of Irish musicians have interacted with the music of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The following sections examine the approaches of folksong collectors and instrumental studies of Newfoundland music.

#### ***4.3.2 Newfoundland Instrumental Music Scholarship***

The first field recordings of Newfoundland dance fiddlers were made by folklorists Halpert and Widdowson (see MUNFLA 66-024)<sup>95</sup>, although a few incidental instrumental tunes were collected by MacEdward Leach earlier in 1950-51. During their 1960s trips to the island's west coast, they encountered Rufus Guinchard, who was later "discovered" by the folk revival and performed internationally. In the 1970s, folklorist Wilf Wareham interviewed quite a few fiddlers and accordion players on the Avalon and

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<sup>94</sup> Formed in 1993 with core players, Alan Doyle, Bob Hallet and Sean McCann, Great Big Sea has become of the most well-known bands to be produced out of St. John's. They have issued ten albums and two DVD's in their 20 years which are a mix of Newfoundland and Irish music and original compositions. For more information see their website (Great Big Sea 1996-2011, np).

<sup>95</sup> Archival collections are listed by accession number for cross-reference at the end of Appendix Eleven.



Burin Peninsulas (1973-1974, MUNFLA 79-054). Unfortunately, neither of these collections has been published although excerpts have appeared on archival CDs (S. Johnson 2012; Narváez 2006). In 1979, Kelly Russell travelled around the province collecting tunes. In the 1990s, Kelly Russell published the first small notated collections and in the early 2000s published two larger volumes which presented the repertoire of Guinchard and Benoit in one volume and other fiddlers from whom he had collected in the other called *All the Rest* (1992, 2000, 2003, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Christina Smith has also put out a small book of easy Newfoundland tunes from her recent collecting and developed a Newfoundland-centred fiddle method (2006, 2008a, 2008b).

Prior to 2000 there was very little published specifically on Newfoundland instrumental music. Up to that point the only studies conducted about fiddlers in Newfoundland were by Quigley, Swackhammer, Russell and Rosenberg. There were no specific scholarly writings on Newfoundland instrumental music produced until Swackhammer's master's thesis on fiddler Frank Squires (1979). Fiddler Kelly Russell wrote a biography of Rufus Guinchard (1982). Russell's book includes 60 tunes from Guinchard's repertoire and represents the first significant notation of Newfoundland dance music. Neil Rosenberg included an annotated discography of Newfoundland fiddle recordings in the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin's* special issue on fiddle music in Canada (1985). Colin Quigley was the first scholar to write significant works on Newfoundland instrumental music. His master's thesis (1982) which was subsequently published as *Close to the Floor: Folk Dance in Newfoundland* (1985) focused on dance traditions from the south shore of Bonavista Bay. The only other published works on dance in Newfoundland have been written by Kristin Harris-Walsh who has focused on the

element of Irishness in vernacular dance in the province (Harris 2002; Harris-Walsh 2009). Except for Harris-Walsh and Quigley's works this represents a major lacuna, directly related to instrumental music, in the research.<sup>96</sup> Quigley's PhD dissertation work was with French-Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit from Black Duck Brook on the Port-au-Port Peninsula. Benoit was known for composing tunes, and in his work Quigley has examined Benoit's compositional processes and his musical worldview (1987, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1995).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there have been four master's thesis written on the fiddle and accordion traditions in Newfoundland including my own on the dance music traditions in Bonavista and Conception Bays. Danette Eddy's work examines how Rufus Guinchard's style changed through his exposure to the Newfoundland folk revival movement (2002). Kelly Best's work is a performance ethnography of the Beaches Accordion Festival (2006). Anthropologist Samantha Breslin has examined the session scene in St. John's through ethnography (2011). Christina Smith published a two-part article outlining several regional styles around the island based on immigration patterns and an article on the high incidence of asymmetrical tunes found in the provinces fiddle literature (2003a, 2003b). As previously mentioned, Flynn examined Don Randell's career as a commercial fiddle player in Newfoundland (2007). In 2008, the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo) was held in St. John's which encouraged a number of further papers from students and scholars alike on fiddle music in Newfoundland (Allison 2008;

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<sup>96</sup> There are a number of collections of unpublished dance research in MUNFLA particularly in relation to Dr. Wareham's assignments which were titled "Towards an Ethnography of 'Times' in..." and the students focused on interviewing people of different communities with which they were familiar. These collections potentially represent a great resource for learning more about the party and dance traditions of the province.

Best 2008; O’Connell 2008; Osborne 2008a; C. Smith 2008c). The 2010 NAFCo in Aberdeen, Scotland also saw three papers on Newfoundland instrumental music including one by O’Connell outlining the role of the fiddler in Newfoundland; Breslin’s examination of session players’ choices between Irish and Newfoundland music in St. John’s; and my own look at the four generations of musicians in the Ray Walsh Family of Bay de Verde, CB (Breslin 2010; O’Connell 2010; Osborne 2010b). Although many of these sources have focused on fiddlers specifically, I think it is important to recognize that the fiddle and accordion fulfill an interchangeable role in the musical tradition. Therefore I would hope that future work in the area of Newfoundland “fiddle” will more often include both violinists and accordionists.

#### ***4.3.3 Early to Mid-20th-century Folksong Collectors (1920s-1960s)***

The folksong tradition has received considerably more attention than the instrumental traditions in both scholarship and general consciousness. The major collections usually discussed are those collected in the 1920s and 30s by Greenleaf and Mansfield (1933), Karpeles (1971) and Gerald S. Doyle (1927, 1940, 1955, 1966, 1978); and those collected in the 1950s and 60s by Peacock (1963, 1965) and Leach (1965). Prior to Confederation, interested collectors came to the island primarily from the United States and Britain. The most noted local collector was businessman Gerald S. Doyle. It was not until after Confederation that the National Museum of Man<sup>97</sup> expressed interest

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<sup>97</sup> Now known as the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

in the new province. This endeavour by the Museum was spearheaded by Margaret Sargent during her work term with Barbeau (Guigné 2008a, 63).<sup>98</sup>

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century folksong scholarship has continued to be very strong in Newfoundland folklore which examine numerous aspects of the tradition. To engage with all of these sources is beyond the scope of this literature review but I will list a few of the areas in which research has been undertaken. For example, there have been area case studies which have focused on families (Chafe 1996), seasonal traditions (Cox 1975), occupational folklore (Ashton 1986; Fraser 1981), English ballads (McNaughton 1984) and discussions of how local compositions interact with ideas of revival and nationalism (Bishop 1992; Gregory 2004; Pocius 1988).

A sense of place was central to the interest in Newfoundland as a collecting area and two general attitudes prevailed – that of an isolated, uncritical repository of Western European texts and the other of a local tradition which was constantly inventive and open to new material from a variety of sources. Newfoundland and Labrador was viewed as a suitably isolated region to be a treasure trove of forgotten songs from the old country. On the other hand, in the 1968 foreword of the reprinted 1933 *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland* by Greenleaf and Mansfield, MacEdward Leach notes local innovativeness:

If a folklorist should be given the opportunity to create an ideal folk region, he could hardly do better than to duplicate Newfoundland. It is an island and until recently an island difficult to access. It has always been thinly populated. From earliest times the folk have lived in tiny out-ports at the heads of the deep fjord-like harbours that serrate the coast. All of this developed a culture turned in on

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<sup>98</sup> Sargent did not publish her field work from 1950, and Kenneth Peacock was her successor at the museum (Guigné 2004, 195-208)

itself and a highly self-sufficient one. (Greenleaf and Mansfield [1933] 2004, xxvi)

Such isolation attracted Maud Karpeles during the same time period. Karpeles was seeking the ideal “singing village” like those she found in the Appalachians with her mentor Cecil Sharp. As Narváez, Lovelace, and Carpenter have assessed, Karpeles held many preconceptions about what a folksong was, or should be. She often decided upon entering a community whether or not it was likely to contain songs she wanted based on the state of modernization (Lovelace 2004, 292). Karpeles was searching only for songs which she deemed “authentic,” meaning British and part of the Child canon. She felt that the “Come-all-ye type of tune,” an integral part of the local composing traditions, held “little aesthetic value” and it was this “mess of stuff” through which she had to wade to find her isolated gems (Carpenter 1980, 118; Karpeles 1971, 18). For Karpeles, any song which may have been mediated through publishing or recording was tainted. Karpeles is well-recognized for her prejudices, but she was not the only collector who prided her/himself on finding old non-media-influenced songs. As Narváez has aptly pointed out, Karpeles, Leach and Peacock were all swayed by the “conservative ideological biases” which permeated the folksong revival led by Cecil Sharp (1995, 215). As Pat Byrne explained on a radio program, this mode of 19th-century thinking views folksongs as if they simply “sprung up out of the ground that nobody wrote them, they were created by the singing dancing throng, of happy peasants floating around the country side” (see J. Fitzpatrick 2001). Often contested by scholars, the basic romantic idea that folk music comes from an unknowable, anonymous “source” and a collective unconscious

wellspring is sometimes still to be found amongst the general public, although Newfoundland musicians are often very careful to acknowledge the composers of songs.

Of course there were other major collectors who did not hold prejudices towards popular songs whether they were locally composed or learned from broadsides or radio. For example, Greenleaf, who collected in the 1920s just before Karpeles, was noted for her love of the local songs which chronicled history. She stated that the local songs were of “exceptional interest” and that “a complete collection of them would...give a complete history of the island” (2004, xxxvii). She noted not only Child ballads but also broadsides from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as songs from all over North America, France and Ireland and a small collection of local instrumental dance tunes (ibid., xxxvii, 375-381). Greenleaf’s publication of songs was also the first to use musical notation.

The other influential collector of local songs was Gerald S. Doyle, who used his song books as advertisements. Collectively the three song books published during his lifetime represent 95 songs with two additional editions printed in 1966 and 1978 and a reprint of the 1940 edition (G. S. Doyle 1927, 1940, 1955, 1966, 1978; Guigné 2008b, xvi). Doyle was in correspondence with both Greenleaf and Karpeles (Guigné 2008b, xi). As Gregory has pointed out, Doyle’s songsters held a high number of “soft nationalist” lyrics, the publication of which followed in the footsteps of a songster series by James Murphy and John Burke which featured patriotic songs (2004, 8). Doyle’s sense of place was quite strong. He edited his collections based on the localization of the lyrics and composition rather than a sense of pedigree in the wider folksong canon. Rosenberg puts forth a few interesting observations about Doyle’s collections which are

quite pertinent to this dissertation. Rosenberg notes that in the 1927 songster there is a substantial number of Irish type comic songs, and suggests that that this “Irishness would be interpreted as Catholicism” by Doyle’s audience (1991a, 51). This is a political-religious dimension and as Rosenberg states, “Doyle’s uses of Irish and Catholic identity in this first edition of his songster appear to reflect a perception of a close fit between his Irish-Catholic identity and the Newfoundland identity he was advocating in compiling the songster” (ibid., 51). However, this angle is downplayed in future editions which highlight more shipwreck and disaster songs. This shift reflected changing social conditions throughout the 1930s (Rosenberg 1994a, 56).

Kenneth Peacock produced the largest published collection of songs from Newfoundland. The National Museum of Man published three volumes of *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports* (1965) which included 546 songs of the 766 he collected in the ten-year period between 1951 and 1961 (Guigné 2004, 1; Peacock 1965). He published another smaller collection entitled “Native Songs of Newfoundland” (1963) which included 12 of the 145 local songs he had collected (Guigné 2004, 195; Peacock 1963). Peacock distinguished local songs from the “older songs” which had roots in the British Isles. He felt some of the local songs were comparable to the older songs while at the same time he thought the English tradition to be more musically interesting and of higher quality (Guigné 2004, 18; Peacock 1963, 213).<sup>99</sup>

Very little has been written about MacEdward Leach’s collection activities or approaches. In fact I only know of three scholarly discussions of his work. The first is a

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<sup>99</sup> I am now working as musical transcription assistant for Anna Kearney-Guigné on a fourth volume from Peacock’s collection. It is clear that many of the songs he chose not to publish were of local origin and often featured asymmetry or non-standard forms.

description by Neil Rosenberg and Carole Henderson of the collection of Canadian materials sent to MUNFLA in 1970, Peter Narváez's article "Newfoundland Vernacular Song" and the *MacEdward Leach and the Songs of Atlantic Canada* website (Henderson and Rosenberg 1970; MUNFLA and MMAP 2006a; Narváez 1995).<sup>100</sup> Surely this is an area open for investigation. Interestingly, Leach published the smaller of his two collections from the province. In 1950 and 1951 he travelled to Newfoundland and recorded 585 songs on the Avalon Peninsula as well as the west coast (MUNFLA and MMAP 2006b, np). In the Museum of Civilization collection there are 178 songs from his 1960 trip to the south coast of Labrador of which 138 were published.<sup>101</sup>

A more recent collection of Newfoundland songs to be published in the collection style is *Come and I Will Sing You* and features songs from Placentia Bay including local songs and those learned from the radio (Lehr and Best 1985). There is also a series of local piano arrangements by musician Eric West (2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003, 2009) some of which he collected, as well as a volume of Newfoundland dances collected by West and Rutherford (2007). Of course, Newfoundlanders did retain many old British songs but they also learnt and enjoyed many Irish songs, broadsides, and music they heard on the radio. As Karpeles aptly observed, in comparing Newfoundland with the Appalachian mountains, "the island has not had the same immunity from modern civilization, for the sea does not isolate to the same extent as does a mountain range"

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<sup>100</sup> The *MacEdward Leach and Songs of Atlantic Canada* is comprised of over 700 pages of material, including a section on his collection practices.

<sup>101</sup> This information was gleaned from my work with the collection at the Museum of Civilization in 2000-2001 which resulted in the publication of an archival CD titled *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports and Labrador* (Osborne and Ouelett 2005). This CD presents the original recordings of singers from the Peacock and Leach collections.



(1971, 17). It was very true that Newfoundland enjoyed all kinds of music including popular songs of the day, classical music, jazz, brass bands and church music.

#### ***4.4 Radio, Television and Recording in Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Newfoundland***

The following sections give brief introductions to early radio, television programs and the recording industry in Newfoundland. This is not intended to be an exhaustive study of early electronic media on the island but is meant to give enough information for the reader to understand the general state of mass media technologies in the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

##### ***4.4.1 Early Radio and Phonographs in Newfoundland***

Despite its geographical distance from the rest of the continent, new technologies still made their way to Newfoundland. In 1891, there was a cylinder phonograph demonstration in St. John's and a similar machine called a "Graphophone" was available for private purchase by 1898 in Gray and Goodland's shop on Water Street (Wadden 1987, 44). In 1897 the first gramophone, using discs instead of cylinders, was being used to provide a soundtrack for a cinematograph film (ibid., 46). Gramophones became available for sale the following year alongside the phonograph and both cylinder and disc technologies were used for public presentations of lectures and music (ibid., 47).<sup>102</sup> Newfoundland recording artists, however, had to seek larger markets outside of

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<sup>102</sup> The first gramophones owners in the country were a Mr. J. Callahan and the famous balladeer Johnny Burke. Burke in particular advertised to rent his machine so that citizens could listen to American music as well as local songs (Wadden 1987, 47). Presumably, Burke recorded the local songs himself.

Newfoundland. Taft states that, in 1904, when the Newfoundlander Georgina Stirling was said to have recorded in Italy, there were not enough of the machines on the island to make it viable for a musician to market recordings solely to Newfoundlanders (1975, x). These machines obviously soon became popular, since by the 1920s and 1930s folksong collectors such as Greenleaf and Karpeles, noted Newfoundland singers' penchant for learning and enjoying new songs from radio and recordings, alongside their more traditional repertoire (Hiscock 1984, 2; Karpeles 1971, 18; Webb 1994, 335). Leach and Greenleaf both commented that many singers owned songbooks, broadsides and recordings (Greenleaf and Mansfield [1933] 1968, iii, xxvi; 2004, 9; Leach 1965, 11-12). In his discussion of Karpeles's field diaries, Lovelace commented that she was unimpressed when she was brought to hear jazz in Spaniard's Bay, Conception Bay as it was one of the communities in which she hoped to discover what she considered to be true "folksong" (2004, 292). It is plain that the musical tastes of Newfoundlanders have long been varied and diverse. Contrary to popular fears that recordings would discourage people from learning an instrument, Newfoundlanders appeared to have thrived on new material and were eager to learn what they could from recordings.

Throughout the 1920s, radio stations from the Maritime Provinces of Canada and the United States were easily accessible to Newfoundlanders with radio sets. Stations even further abroad could also be accessed; Webb notes that local stations in the Maritimes would often limit their air time, so that international stations could be heard.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> For example, my grandfather, Joliffe Lloyd Quinton of Princeton, Bonavista Bay, was an avid amateur short-wave radio enthusiast and sent letters to stations he heard from around the globe. In return, he received postcards from stations as far away as Europe, South America, Africa and Japan. Postcards were received from the following stations and locations: Voice of Guatamela, Radiofusora nacional TGW 1520

Newfoundland radio stations in the 1920s included VOWR, and 8WMC. VOWR was first broadcast in July 1924 (Klassen 2007, 206).

By the 1930s, Newfoundland based stations were well situated. Of the seven which were in operation by 1934, only VOGY was strong enough to provide service to most of the island (Webb 1994, 162). Other stations based in St. John's were connected to commercial enterprises, such as VOAS for Ayres and Sons Ltd. department store, private radio stations such as VONF and VOCM; or church organizations including the Seventh Day Adventists and Wesley United Church (VOWR) (ibid., 162-163). Of these seven, VOCM and VOWR are still in operation under their original call names.<sup>104</sup> In 1939, the Newfoundland Broadcasting Act was passed and the Newfoundland Broadcasting Commission, later the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, was established (ibid., 189, 197).

When radio and recordings were introduced, folk musicians, already adept at learning by ear, were excited to hear a new style and new tunes. In the case of vinyl records, the process was even easier than radio, as they could be played repeatedly, until the tune was learned precisely. Elsewhere in Canada, the US, and Europe, this shift in source material has been of interest to scholars who study folk music traditions, but it was

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Guatemala 1939; W2XE Columbia Broadcasting System Inc. New York City, 1939; W1-SWL Providence, USA; CHNX Halifax, Nova Scotia; WBOS Boston, Massachusetts; New Orleans 1940; Radio Salas, Havana, Cuba, 1940; Syracuse, New York USA; San Francisco 1940; Argentina LRA, 1939; VONF, VONG Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland 1940; W3XL Radio City, New York; Switzerland; Radio Hilversum, Holland 1939; CJCB Sydney, Nova Scotia 1941; HCJB Ecuador, The Voice of the Andes; JOK HPSK Panama, Feb. 17, 1940; Japan 1940; Hungary; Madres, Spain; CKCW Moncton New Brunswick 1940; ZRL South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) 1939; W3XAU Philadelphia Pennsylvania USA, 1939; XEAW Dallas, Texas, 1940 (Station at Renosa, Mexico, offices at Dallas Texas); W1XAL Boston, Massachusetts; Radio Martinique, 1939; SWL-WY Georgia, 1941; W2XAF Schenectady, New York 1939. This list was provided by Sylvia Ficken.

<sup>104</sup> VOGY became part of CBN and VOAC became VOAR.

a frustration to collectors. Although some have dismissed repertoire learned from mass media sources as inauthentic, others have seen it as a valid new twist in the modern tradition. In her work on Métis fiddling in Manitoba, Lederman identified two styles, the “old” and the “new” the latter being the repertoire learned and influenced by recordings since the 1940s (1991, 40). She does not, however, focus on how this media influenced repertoire, emphasizing instead, the older style passed on through the aural tradition.

Although many scholars and performers have lamented the influence of recordings, it is also recognized that recordings can re-stimulate tradition. Reiss explains the apparently contradictory role of sound technology in Ireland. He states that early twentieth-century Irish music “suffered the effects of the media” once radio broadcasting began and residents were “no longer sonically isolated.” He suggests that this diminished the uniqueness of some regional styles, while others retained their distinctive qualities (2003, 147). He goes on to explain that, at the same time that recordings were diffusing the music, they also helped to revitalize it, through recordings from diaspora populations abroad (*ibid.*, 151). One relevant example is how Irish-American recordings helped to rejuvenate traditional music in Ireland in the 1940s and 1950s. Recordings of country and western music also worked in the 1960s to rejuvenate the Ukrainian language in the prairies, as that community has taken to recording country-styled songs in Ukrainian and developed their own niche recording market (Klymasz 1972). Bayard laments that by the 1970s it was hard to find players in Pennsylvania who have learned the majority of their tunes from their local area, rather than from the mass media (1982, 1-2). Early twentieth-century scholars often looked for tunes learned through the aural tradition; in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century ethnomusicologists consider it unjustifiable to ignore music which is learned from mass media sources and equally enjoyed by fiddlers.

#### ***4.4.2 Start of the Newfoundland Music Recording Industry***

Taft states that the first music recording directed to a Newfoundland audience was Arthur Scammell's 1943 "Squid Jigging Ground," a private recording made through RCA in Montreal with financial backing of Gerald S. Doyle. Scammell estimated that he sold approximately fifteen to twenty thousand copies of his recording (Taft 1975, xiii). Folk song releases have always been popular in Newfoundland; however the recording market for instrumental music has been variable with instrumental tunes usually occupying only a few tracks on a song-based album. In the mid-'50s the local recording industry started in earnest with the release of the first albums of folksongs and instrumental tunes by folksinger Omar Blondahl (1923-1993)<sup>105</sup> and accordionist Wilf Doyle (1925-2012)<sup>106</sup> respectively (Blondahl 1955; W. Doyle 1956). The first accordion album was been produced by Wilf Doyle in 1956, followed by another in 1960 (Taft 1975, 10). Blondahl asked Wilf Doyle to accompany him on a few recorded songs and it was this first combining of guitar, accordion and folksongs which Rosenberg credits with starting the sound which was picked up by accordionist Harry Hibbs in the 1960s (1991b, 24). In 1957, the Shamrocks, also known as the Happy Valley Boys, featuring fiddlers Don Randell and Ted Blanchard released an album called *Shamrocks: Newfoundland Fiddle*

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<sup>105</sup> For a list of Omar Blondahl's recordings please see the Bibliography and/or Appendix Ten: List of Audiovisual Materials. (Blondahl 1955, 1956, 1959a, 1959b)

<sup>106</sup> For a list of Wilf Doyle's recordings please see the Bibliography and/or Appendix Ten: List of Audiovisual Materials (W. Doyle 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962, 1965, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1977, 2008)

*Music* (Rosenberg 1985, 6; Shamrocks 1957; Taft 1975, 47).<sup>107</sup> This was followed by a solo accordion album by Raymond Walsh in 1966 on the Arc label named *Ray Walsh: Favorite Reels and Jigs of Newfoundland* (Taft 1975, 50; R. Walsh 1966). Perhaps with the exception of ex-pat Newfoundland accordion player Harry Hibbs, Newfoundland dance musicians have not enjoyed the widespread popularity of other players such as fiddlers Don Messer, Graham Townsend or Andy DeJarlis. Harry Hibbs included dance tunes on his albums, but instrumental based albums were rare.<sup>108</sup> In a 1985 Newfoundland fiddle discography, Rosenberg lists other recordings by Tickle Harbour (1979), *Music From French Newfoundland/ Musique de la Terre-Neuve Francaise* (K. Russell 1980) and Walter MacIssac's *Musical Memories of Codroy Valley* (1977) (Rosenberg 1985, 5-6). He also includes recordings which feature only a few tunes including those by Ray Johnson (1972, 1973, 1981), The Kitty Vitty Minstrels (1973, 2011) and the comedy band Wonderful Grand Band (1978, 1981) (Rosenberg 1985, 5-6). The early instrumental dance albums featured accordion players and the first fiddle recordings were released by fiddlers Emile Benoit of the Port-au-Port Peninsula (1979, 1982, 1992), Rufus Guinchard of the GNP (1978, 1982, 1990) and accordionist Minnie White (1916-2002) of the Codroy Valley (1994). While there have been solo instrumental albums in the past they are becoming more popular in the early 2000s now that producing a CD has become easier and solo or small ensemble albums are beginning to fill a small local market. It is exciting to see a newer generation moving this functional

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<sup>107</sup> Please see Appendix Two for locations and approximate dates of musical groups mentioned in this dissertation.

<sup>108</sup> For a list of Harry Hibbs' recordings please see the Bibliography and/or Appendix Ten: List of Audiovisual Materials (Hibbs 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982). Hibbs recorded all of his albums in Ontario.

dance music from the dance floor to new contexts such as the concert stage, pubs, bands, recordings and even using it in collaborations with other musical styles such as jazz and world music.<sup>109</sup>

#### ***4.4.3 Wilf Doyle (1925-2012): A Transitional Figure from Dance “Fiddler” to Recording Artist***

Accordianist Wilf Doyle started as a dance musician and became the first Newfoundland musician to record instrumental dance music. Thus he was a transitional figure between these two parts of a continuing but changing tradition. As Doyle was an important figure in Newfoundland music I will give a short overview of his career in order to give the reader a sense of how he negotiated multiple repertoires and the life of a musician whose career extended from the dance to recording eras. Doyle was heavily influenced by the Irish-American vaudeville group the McNulty Family (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 73-45).<sup>110</sup>

Born in 1925 in Conception Harbour, CB, Wilf Doyle was part of a musical family. Doyle grew up in the 1930s listening to various types of music including the popular tunes that his mother and sister played on the piano, such as “Red Sails in the Sunset,”<sup>111</sup> his father and brother playing local dance music as well as to Irish or pop music on the radio (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 73-45). Doyle first recalls hearing the McNulty family on the radio in the 1930s and they quickly became one of his

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<sup>109</sup> For an extensive online discography please refer to the Centre of Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Centre for Newfoundland Studies 2009, np).

<sup>110</sup> Doyle’s version of “The Rollicking Skipper” is considered in the analysis in that Chapter Five, Section 5.11.2.

<sup>111</sup> This may refer to the song of the same name written by Hugh Williams in 1935 for singer Jimmy Kennedy.

idols (ibid.).<sup>112</sup> The young man also learned tunes from listening to the older women in the community who would sing instrumental tunes. In an interview with folklorists Sheldon Posen and Michael Taft, Doyle recalled listening to the blacksmith's wife by, "sitting under the window... and listen to her singing. She used to smoke a pipe, back by the stove... and she'd sing the tunes. The tunes I actually play on the accordion today, I heard those [as]... what they'd call 'chin music'" (ibid.). Doyle started teaching himself instruments, including an accordion brought home from the United States by his father, by practising in the empty hayloft in the summertime (Mullaly 2000, 78; *Newfoundland Herald* 1980b, 12).

At age nine, Doyle began playing for private parties and shortly thereafter began to "spell" older musicians at community dances (Benson 1996, 14). In the early 1940s, there were four or five dance fiddlers, not accordionists, in the community and at that time they all took turns performing (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 74-45). The Wilf Doyle Orchestra was started later in the 1940s when Mickie Duggan and the Barndance from St. John's cancelled a garden party performance in Conception Harbour. Doyle and a few others were asked to play (NewCap Broadcasting nd, 3). This event gave Doyle the idea of getting a PA system and making music his career. He believes he was the first to claim taxes as a musician in Newfoundland as the tax department was very confused by his situation! (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 74-45). It was not possible to work full-time as a musician so Doyle also worked other jobs including at the

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<sup>112</sup> This date is prior to the commencement of the Big 6 show I speak about in Chapter Five which began ca. 1944. The McNulty's started recording in 1936 so it is possible that Doyle heard them on another local or international show in the late 1930s or early 1940s prior to the Big 6 which specialized in airing the McNulty Family.



US base at Argentia, as a lounge owner, a driver for the Gander base, a radio repair man and a taxi driver (Benson 1996, 14; Mullaly 2000, 79; NewCap Broadcasting nd, 2).

Doyle met his future wife Christine in 1947 and she became a long term member of the group (*Newfoundland Herald* 1980b, 13; R. Young 2003, 24).

The Wilf Doyle Orchestra became popular locally and was called upon to play dance music for community “times” and garden parties. Audiences and dancers were used to a solo tradition of one fiddler or one accordion player but the Doyle Orchestra offered a three-piece band with a variety of music which was “as good as fire on the dance floor” where they needed the music to be “fast” and “hard” (Mullaly 2000, 79). At community events they played “mostly square dances, reels and lancers, [and] if they could hum a tune [Doyle] could play it for them” (Benson 1996, 14). Later in his career their repertoire expanded to include country and western, rock and roll and foxtrots in addition to the local set dance music (Benson 1996, 14; C. Smith 2007b, 19). Doyle described how he would approach an evening of music and the wide musical tastes of his audiences:

You’d probably start off with an Irish number, or a set of Irish numbers, and then you’d go into a set of country and western and then you’d go into a set of rock... the same people dancing to all of this type of music...people as old as 85 looking for our latest rock numbers. (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 73-74)

This quote illustrates the flexibility in both musical tastes of audience and abilities of the musicians. Neither group had any problem with diverse repertoires co-existing during the same evening of entertainment.

Through the years the group played for all sorts of venues and audiences around the province including the military bases, political rallies for Joey Smallwood and Frank

Moore and for quiet to rowdy audiences who were prone to “out-of-control dancing” and “fighting” (Benson 1996, 14; Hyslop 2008, 21; Wicks 2007, B3). Their regular gig route was “right around the boot” from Gander to St. John’s and down to St. Mary’s Bay and over to Burin (see Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 74-45).

The group’s first radio performance was a 1949 six-month contract on a farming show for which they named their group The Farmaires. Despite being a seasoned live performer Doyle found the live-to-air world intimidating. He recalled that “once the red light came on and the finger was pointed at you, you were on the air... there was no such thing as backing up or doing it over, I was scared stiff” (ibid.).

Doyle’s first studio recording was with Omar Blondahl known on the radio as Sagebrush Sam. Wilf played accordion as accompaniment to his singing. After the record executive at Rodeo heard the album he was very excited about the “new music” sound that Wilf’s accordion presented and he signed Doyle to a contract with Rodeo (ibid.). Dave Maunder was asked to help with the recording session during which they used two microphones and an Ampex 500 tape recorder which was so big it took two people to lift it. As Maunder told reporter Ron Young:

In 1955, when I was a young recording technician at VOCM in St. John’s, I was asked to come back on my Saturday afternoon off for a special recording job. I didn’t realize I’d be making history, for the job was to tape some tunes for the Wilf Doyle band for an LP. As far as I know, the result was very likely the first ever commercial recording of authentic traditional Newfoundland music, just as it was being played at dances and parties and weddings all over Newfoundland. (ibid.)

What particularly amazed Maunder was that the whole album was done in one take. As they hoped to re-release songs as singles on 78rpm, which had a limited time span of about three minutes, Doyle arranged with Maunder to signal him at 2.5 minutes at which

time he would look around at the band and they would finish together on the next turn (Maunder, pers. comm. 2010). This album, *Traditional Jigs and Reels of Newfoundland* was the first in a series of LPs released over the next few decades including a bestselling album called *The Sailor's Alphabet* (NewCap Broadcasting nd, 4). He aimed his tunes choices for a national market, as Newfoundland was too small to gain much in royalties. Unfortunately, his distribution contract only granted him royalties from Canadian sales despite international distribution in the United States, South American and Australia (Maunder, pers. comm. 2010).

Wilf Doyle accumulated his share of accolades over the years in recognition of his pioneering role in Newfoundland music including being named a two-time winner of the Stompin' Tom Connors award (*Telegram* 2002, A5; L. Fraser, pers. comm. 2010). Linda Fraser, of the Holyrood Heritage Society, explained that Doyle was twice nominated for the Order of Newfoundland and in 2007 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the 31<sup>st</sup> Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival (L. Fraser, pers. comm. 2010; C. Smith 2007b, 19; Wicks 2007, B3).

In 2008, Doyle's new hometown of Holyrood honoured him by releasing his first CD entitled *Is Everybody Ready?* which re-issued twenty three popular tracks from his recording career (W. Doyle 2008; Hyslop 2008, 21). The town also hosted a special night entitled "Wilf Doyle Down Memory Lane Dinner and Dance" on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 and all 180 tickets sold out the day they went on sale (Hyslop 2008, 21). Profits from the sales went towards the establishment of a scholarship fund for the community (ibid.). As Christina Smith has stated:

The nature of Wilf Doyle's influence on the canon of Newfoundland instrumental music [is such] that even now, fifty years after the release of his first album, these tunes are identified by accordionists in this province as Wilf Doyle tunes...[his music] was a new synthesis of traditional and popular music which proved to have broad appeal and influenced the sound of recorded Newfoundland music for decades after. (2007b, 19)

Part of Doyle's influential sound was a drum in the ensemble. He attributes his preference for including a drum beat to spending years listening to dancers' feet on the floor boards of church halls; as he has stated, "The beat came from the feet of Newfoundlanders, the beat from the feet" (NewCap Broadcasting nd, 4).

#### ***4.4.4 Canadian and Newfoundland Variety Music Television Shows***

Between the late 1950s and 1977, music variety shows were a staple of Canadian television.<sup>113</sup> *Don Messer's Jubilee* is credited with beginning the national trend in 1959 followed by *Singalong Jubilee* in 1961 (Dick 2004, 7; Pittson 2010c).<sup>114</sup> Manny Pittson, producer of *Singalong Jubilee*, and other shows including *Tommy Makem and Ryan's Fancy*, played a significant role in the shaping of Canadian variety shows. Pittson states that Canadian shows, in comparison to "glossy" US shows such as *Sing Along with Mitch*, which featured a full chorus and celebrities, were cheaper to produce and had "more shit on their boots" (2010c). In other words the Canadian shows were not as refined or polished as their American counterparts. I understood this to mean the Canadian shows were thought to be less commercial and perhaps viewed as more authentic. Other shows during the time period included *Harry Hibbs Live at the Caribou*,

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<sup>113</sup> This included the CBC, CTV and other regional or local stations.

<sup>114</sup> Messer was preceded locally in Newfoundland by folksinger Omar Blondahl (aka Sagebrush Sam) who was featured on three 15-minute weekly television shows on CJON (Rosenberg 1991b, 24-25).

*All Around the Circle, Ryan's Fancy, Pig and Whistle Show, Tommy Hunter* and *The Irish Rovers*. An independent Canadian website which archives television shows in Canada has listed 122 “music/variety” type shows with the vast majority having been aired, if only briefly, between the late 1950s and 1980 (TVarchive.ca 2010, np).<sup>115</sup>

Chapter Six focuses on the Irish group Ryan's Fancy, in particular on their television show. Below I discuss only those shows which affected *Ryan's Fancy* directly, including *Don Messer's Jubilee* which Pittson referred to as the “granddaddy” of all Canadian variety shows (Pittson 2010c).

*Don Messer's Jubilee* began in 1959 on CBC and made national news when it was cancelled in 1969 resulting in public protests and debates in the parliament (Pittson 2010c; Rosenberg 2002a, 192; Trew 2002, 45-46). After its cancellation Manny Pittson re-launched it from a smaller station in Hamilton, Ontario. The show featured fiddler Don Messer, singers, and step or set dancers dressed in suits or dresses in a stylized barn dance setting. Rosenberg has examined Don Messer's career and notes his influence across Canada as helping to produce a canon of fiddle repertoire (2002b, 192).

*Singalong Jubilee* was created as a summer substitute for *Don Messer's Jubilee*. The pilot was pitched as *Sing Along with Seeger* and was meant to be a Canadian version of the US *Sing Along with Mitch*. Pete Seeger was the intended host, but soon after the pilot, Seeger was caught in the anti-communist net of the United States and backed out of the show as he was not sure of his future (Dick 2004, 10-12). Having lost their star, the producer Manny Pittson stated that they were faced with a “hey kids, let's put on a

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<sup>115</sup> Queen's University also has an online archival listing of CBC programs between 1952 and 1982. However it is not searchable by series type (Allan 1996c, np).

show!” situation in which they recruited banjo player Bill Langstroth, who mildly resembled Seeger, guitarist Fred McKenna and a bunch of their friends to whip up a pilot (ibid., 13). The series aired until 1974 and launched the careers of many of Canada’s best known singers, including Anne Murray. The show had a more informal approach than that of Don Messer, and featured younger performers who appeared relaxed but clean cut. One of the goals of the show was to appeal to the younger generation and be a “good deal more hip” than *Don Messer’s Jubilee* (ibid., 10).<sup>116</sup>

The *Harry Hibbs Live at the Caribou* show was also produced by Manny Pittson but was shown only locally in Toronto. When interviewed years later, Pittson remarked the show was not worth upgrading to national standards when the only two demographics were found in Newfoundland and in Toronto’s Newfoundland diaspora (2010c). The show was popular in the Toronto and southern Ontario region. Pittson describes the experience as follows:

*At the Caribou* featured Harry Hibbs and his band entertaining in a second floor club at the corner of Bathurst and College known as the Caribou. I have vivid memories of climbing the stairs against a wall of humanity that kept up a steady jig and reel rhythm going no matter how crowded the floor. The atmosphere was one of good cheer and more beer...The typical southern Ontario viewer was fascinated by Harry, his step dancing Newfies and his 19th-century voice. (2010a)

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<sup>116</sup> *Singalong Jubilee* has also been credited with creating the music video. This milestone was inadvertently accomplished when they left the studio and sang in the landscape of Nova Scotia (Dick 2004, 31-33).

#### ***4.4.5 Early Newfoundland Radio and Television Music Programs: Saturday Nite Jamboree and All Around the Circle***

The very popular CBC show *All Around the Circle* aired for 13 years (1964-1977). Accordionist Ray Walsh was called on to play in the show due to his connection to well-known singer John White. Walsh explained that he started playing with White in 1963 and together they played on the CBC radio show *Saturday Nite Jamboree* with singer Joan Morrissey, Harry Brown and others. Both *Saturday Nite Jamboree* and *All Around the Circle* grew out of a series of radio shows that started in Newfoundland in the 1930s (Rosenberg 2007, 2).<sup>117</sup> The first Newfoundland radio show to feature a mixture of popular music, country, Irish, Tin Pan Alley ballads and local Newfoundland songs and tunes was the *Irene B. Mellon Show* (1934-1941) followed by *Uncle Tim's Barn Dance* which turned into *The Barn Dance* after 1942 and ran until 1949 (ibid., 2-3; Hiscock 1987, 112). After Confederation with Canada in 1949, radio programs were broadcast encouraging listeners to dance the 'lancers' with music provided by local musicians Don Randell (fiddle), Ted Blanchard (fiddle), Ralph Bishop (guitar) and Hal LaFosse (piano) (ibid., 4). Randell and Blanchard went on to form the Happy Valley Boys (1951-1956) on VPCM radio. In mid-November 1958, *Saturday Nite Jamboree* was aired as a "live to tape" music program until 1969 when it changed format to include more interviews, recorded music and guest artists until 1978 (ibid., 5, 6, 8). As a thirty minute show it was kept short and "fast paced" in order to keep the audience interested and to accommodate those areas of the province which still operated on battery radios

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<sup>117</sup> A detailed and well researched review of these shows from the 1930s-1960s is included in the liner notes to *Saturday Nite Jamboree* (Rosenberg 2007).

(ibid., 6). There were few or no rehearsals but, as with the subsequent *All Around the Circle*, all of the performers were active professionals and needed little prompting and covered glitches easily (ibid., 6).<sup>118</sup> As John White's accompanist, Ray Walsh played the two songs White had selected for the week and perhaps another tune of his own (R. Walsh 2008).

When CBC television decided to start a show about Newfoundland music Walsh stated that "I fell right into it, because I could play a piano accordion and a button accordion which very few people could do, to play the two of them" (ibid.).<sup>119</sup> He stated that *All Around the Circle* evolved directly out of the group that had been *Saturday Nite Jamboree* with a few variations. Indeed a number of the same musicians were cast members in both shows simultaneously. *All Around the Circle* aired for 13 years with a break of one year in 1966-67, and was broadcast nationally through "regional exchange" which meant that the "actual [physical] tape would be sent to Halifax and it would be broadcast from Halifax to their region" and so on (Flynn 2007, 175; R. Walsh 2008). CBC started by making 39 local shows during the winter plus 13 in the summer when it replaced the *Tommy Hunter Show* on the national network. Later, as expenses rose, they cut back to just 22 or 23 shows per season and aired reruns for the rest of the year (R. Walsh 2002).

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<sup>118</sup> Two of the 1963 "Saturday Night Jamboree" shows have been released through the MMAP archival series and Ray Walsh joined the group just following these two shows (Rosenberg 2007, 8).

<sup>119</sup> As explained earlier, the piano accordion is chromatic and can play in any key making it more versatile instrument than the diatonic button accordion. However, the piano accordion also carried a higher social status in the 1960s as it was the dominant accordion in America with a movement towards making it a classical instrument. At this same time the piano accordion was featured regularly on the *Lawrence Welk Show* in the United States.



Walsh explained that it took some work to find the right balance of musicians to form a core band that worked well together musically and personally since filming was stressful (R. Walsh 2008). From the start there was Ray Walsh (accordion), John White (vocal) and Don Randell (fiddle). In the final years of the show the band consisted of Don Randell, Oli Smith (piano), Wally Cobb (bass) and Ray Caravan (drums). There were also two fiddlers for a period, Randell and Ted Blanchard but there were numerous people who played piano and bass throughout the years. Other important performers included Carol Brothers (vocal), and Evan Purchase (guitar, vocal). The first host was Harry Brown and the last host was Doug Laite. In 1998, the members of the group had a reunion concert just a few months before John White died (Rosenberg 2007, 10).

The main emphasis of *All Around the Circle* was on Newfoundland music. There was a meeting prior to each taping to discuss a set list, with each performer suggesting one or two selections. Walsh admits that some songs were Irish but added that they “did every Newfoundland song [they] could find. That was the main thrust of it” (2008). They primarily focused on song repertoire but did play a few short instrumental tunes each week lasting no more than 90 seconds each.

For repertoire selections the members of *All Around the Circle* looked to the wealth of song books published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, claiming that they “had the Gerald S. Doyle books worn out” as well as Peacock and a lot of Johnny Burke songs. Walsh stated that “we always tried to [do more] Newfoundland songs than others, but the Irish tradition is so strong in Newfoundland that people think a lot of the Irish songs are Newfoundland songs anyhow” (ibid.). Flynn explains, however, that once the show went

national the producers rather than the performers decided on the repertoire in order to meet “central Canadian directives for national consumption” (2007, 175).

Walsh feels strongly that *All Around the Circle* played a major role in how Newfoundlanders view their music, that it allowed them to know and love their own music in a new context, that of television. *All Around the Circle* was on TV just as other music shows were and, as mass media often does, it raised the stature of the music to equal musics transmitted from outside the province. Walsh states that *All Around the Circle*

hasn't been given enough credit as a show for the influence it had on Newfoundland music. I think what *All Around the Circle* did... [was it] legitimized the music and made people realize that this is our music, that is good music, this is what people are doing.... When I say Newfoundland music I mean Newfoundland Irish...the music that Newfoundlanders think is theirs. (2008)

This last quote highlights the tension shown throughout the case studies in this dissertation between Newfoundland and Irish music. On the one hand, many Newfoundlanders feel Irish music is a part of their tradition and on the other receive encouragement in their localized musics when they are heard on electronic mass media sources.

#### ***4.5 Media's Role in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Irish Music Revivals***

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a decline in traditional folk musics throughout the western world. Alberger states that during the two world wars many Scottish fiddlers were either killed, wounded or simply stopped playing. One of Scotland's most famous and influential fiddlers, Scott Skinner is quoted in 1916, as saying that there was “no publishing now at any rate; no demand [as] everybody [is] busy killing every living

thing” (quoted in Alburger 1983, 194). Considering that music continued through other major social “upheavals” Alburger suggests that technology was responsible, in large part, for the changes in tastes regarding traditional musics (ibid.). As previously mentioned, Reiss has suggested that one reason for the great change was 20<sup>th</sup>-century sound technology which allowed musicians to have access to repertoires outside of their immediate area (2003, 147).<sup>120</sup>

The earliest Irish music revival of the twentieth century is primarily attributed to the influence of recordings made by ex-pat Irishmen like fiddler Michael Coleman (1891-1945). Coleman, a native of Sligo, Ireland immigrated to the United States as a young man and started a prolific recording career (Moloney 1982, 90-93). Coleman’s and other Irish-American musicians such as accordionist John Kimmel’s 78rpm recordings were regularly sent home to Ireland and inspired musicians to reignite the tradition which had suffered from mass emigration and persecution from the church. In fact, Coleman’s recordings were so influential that Fairbairn and others generally agree that his style now constitutes the national style of Ireland which is played internationally (1994, 577). Krassen detailed in his introduction to the new edition of *O’Neil’s Music of Ireland* that his basis of continuity through the collection was to use Coleman’s variants (1976, 13). McCullough notes that although Coleman’s style was very influential throughout Ireland, the fiddlers of Donegal used his repertoire, but undermined the style by modifying it to their own tastes (1977, 91-97). Graeme Smith notes that two Irish-Australian brothers

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<sup>120</sup> Krassen, in a review of Quebec fiddler Jean Carignan, mentions that regional styles are usually transmitted when fiddlers come in contact with each other. Recordings allowed Carignan to transcend the local repertoires available to him and broaden his repertoire and style in the search of virtuosity (1974, 42).

took different approaches to transferring Coleman's techniques to the older style melodeon and modern chromatic style (1997, 447-450).

While Coleman is the most cited of the influential early Irish recording artists there were many more. In his multi-volume discography, *Ethnic Music on Records: A Discography of the Ethnic Recordings Produced in the United States, 1893-1942*, Spottswood lists 214 separate Irish artists and acts which recorded during this time period (1990, 2737-2870). Of these, there were 29 groups, 81 vocalists, 25 accordionists, 17 violinists, 10 bagpipers, 14 flutists including 2 whistle players and 1 piccolo player, 4 banjo players, 3 pianists, 2 concertina players, 1 musician each on cornet and harmonica (ibid., 2737-2870).<sup>121</sup> Of these, only 11 were women which included 6 vocalists, 4 accordionists, 1 violinist and 1 pianist. An in-depth repertoire study could be conducted to examine the prevalence of repertoire of this era as a whole in Newfoundland recordings.

#### ***4.5.1 Irish Recording Industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

The McNulty Family, an Irish-American musical vaudeville group, was part of the emergence of "ethnic" recordings in the 1920s and 1930s in the United States. This section is a short history of the development of the Irish recording industry, particularly in reference to Decca and Copley to which the McNulty Family were signed.

The McNulty Family is primarily associated with its 78 Decca recordings from the 1930s and 40s although they recorded with other companies until the late 1950s. In

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<sup>121</sup> There was some cross-over between instrumentalists and vocalists. In cases where a musician was listed as both I counted them as an instrumentalist only. There were two violin players who also played accordion and bagpipes respectively and I included them in both categories.

1929, Decca was originally established in Britain as Decca Record Co. and specialized in affordable but quality recordings (Vernon 1995, 121). In 1934, a subsidiary was opened in the United States with a slight name change to Decca Records (Ruppli 1996, xv; Universal Music Group 2010d, np). The U.S operations of Decca were headed by Jack Kapp, a former executive with England's Brunswick label. Knapp left when Decca obtained distribution rights to Brunswick and Arc's material in the Americas (Ruppli 1996, xv). During the Depression, record prices dropped from 75 to 35 cents and production went from 32 million sales in 1927 to just 8 million in 1932 and six million in 1933 (Gronow 1982, 8; Spottswood 1990, xxx, xvii; Trew 2000, 307). US Decca continued to sell its records for the low price of 35 cents and quickly became competitive even when other companies were suffering. Of the three major labels which were Decca, Columbia and Victor, only Decca survived without bankruptcy or restructuring (Spottswood 1990, xvi-xvii). Decca took over the British Brunswick label in 1932 and later the American Brunswick Company (Vernon 1995, 110, 121). Foreshadowing the Decca of today, within the Universal Music group, the company immediately started to acquire other labels and eventually opened studios in Los Angeles and Chicago and New York City (Ruppli 1996, xv; Vernon 1995, 121).<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Decca went on to invest in Universal and in 1952 became a majority stakeholder. Ten years later Decca Records was acquired by MCA Inc. But it was not until 1973 that it switched names to MCA records (Ruppli 1996, xvi; Universal Music Group 2010d, np).

MCA went on to buy many other labels and in 1996 MCA Music Entertainment Group was renamed Universal Music Group adding Polygram in 1998. At some point the Decca label must have been revived as in 1999 Decca and Phillips merged into Decca Music Group (Universal Music Group 2010d, np). The Universal Music Group operates in 77 countries and claims to represent "98% of the music market" globally (2010e, np).

At its peak as an independent record company, Decca recorded artists such as Bing Crosby, the "best selling artist of all time," Judy Garland, Guy Lombardo, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Billie Halliday, and Ella Fitzgerald to name a few (Ruppli 1996, xvi).

Trew notes that Decca became one of four major records companies in the depression era to feature an exclusively Irish series, the Decca 1200 series. Other labels included Okeh, Columbia and Victor. Spottswood's list of ethnic recordings also includes a limited number of 78s from Bluebird and Brunswick (Spottswood 1990, xxxiii-xlvi; Trew 2000, 307).<sup>123</sup> The heyday of Irish recordings was nearing its end when the McNultys started recording in 1936 and by the 1940s all the major labels had stopped recording Irish music as a niche market. This made Decca "the last company to pay [niche markets] serious attention" (Moloney 1982, 94). During the peak there were up to 40 companies recording Irish material in the 43 years between 1899 and 1942. Considering Decca's late emergence on the scene it still cornered almost a fifth of the market (Trew 2000, 306). When the market slowed for Irish music recordings in the late 1940s, Justus O'Byrne DeWitt founded Copley records in order to fill the void left by Decca and other labels (Moloney 1982, 94).

Copley began with Ellen O'Byrne De Witt in New York around 1916 when she opened a store called O'Byrne DeWitt on Third Avenue (Gedutis 2004, 149, 152). Ellen O'Byrne was a pioneer in several areas. Not only did she manage a store attached to her name but when she discovered her customers wanted Irish recordings and there was little to offer them, she approached Columbia Records. Columbia started an Irish series under

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Today Decca is a group of labels specializing in various markets (Universal Music Group 2010b, np). Not surprisingly, Decca Classical along with Deutsche Grammophone and EMI specialize in classical music while Decca Records itself has artists as diverse as Boyz II Men, Sting, The Proclaimers and Rufus Wainwright (2010a, np; 2010c, np). There is also Decca Vision and Decca Broadway (2010b, np). In the past ten years Universal has also acquired Rounder Records and Verve (2010d, np). Rounder is now under Concord Groups.

<sup>123</sup> Bluebird (B-4500 to 4597 from 1936-1939 and B-4900 to B-4999 from 1933-1936 both of these sequences also included West Indies music as well as Irish); Brunswick (68000 to 68004 in 1927); Columbia (33000-F to 33562-F from 1925-1936, 33500-F to 33532-F from 1947-1951); Decca 12000 to 12287 from 1934 to around 1950; Oken 21001 to 21081 from 1921 into the 1930s

the promise that her store would pay for the first 500 discs (ibid., 149). In this manner, she is credited both by Moloney and Gedutis with “single-handedly founding the Irish recording industry” which began in earnest in 1916 after her Columbia deal (Gedutis 2004, 149; Moloney 1982, 90). In 1925, her son Justus O’Byrne DeWitt inherited the business, and in 1926 moved it to Boston’s Dudley Square. There he re-opened under the name O’Byrne DeWitt House of Irish Music (Gedutis 2004, 149-150).<sup>124</sup> With the demise of Decca’s Irish series, Justus started producing his own recordings in 1948. The label name underwent several changes from O’Byrne DeWitt in 1948, then All Ireland, and finally Copley Records in 1953 (ibid., 152). Copley’s only competition as an Irish music record label was the Celtic label from Rhode Island which put out only twenty-four albums (ibid., 154-155). It is not surprising that DeWitt, a businessman, was primarily interesting in making money, but it is surprising by today’s standards, that he did not give royalties and paid very little to the musicians for their time (ibid., 155). This may explain why the McNultys recorded only 41 tracks with Copley, a fraction of what they had recorded with Decca. In the late 1950s, DeWitt found it less profitable to produce albums and shut down that portion of his business (ibid., 157). In the 1990s, Paddy Noonan of Rego Records bought Copley’s master tracks (ibid., 158).

#### ***4.5.2 Irish American Music in New York in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

The Irish music revival of the 1920s to 1940s corresponded with a general folk music revival in the United States (Blaustein 1993, 259; Rosenberg 1993a, 8-9). Being an Irish-American musician in New York at this time must have been a heady experience.

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<sup>124</sup> Dewitt also offered travel services to Ireland.

Due to the rise of niche marketing by recording companies, Irish musicians were able to make three or four times the average wage performing and recording music (Trew 2000, 305). With approximately “28 Irish dance halls” in New York during the roaring 1920s musicians were spoiled for work (ibid.). As Mick Moloney explains, these “ballrooms” covered a wide spectrum of respectability, from large buildings such as the Old Red Mill holding up to 1500 people on multiple floors, to squaloured parlours with thick smoke, low clearances and questionable drinks (1998, 132-136). At the beginning of this period it was customary for a popular hall to hire two bands, one to play American popular music and the other to play Irish music, usually in the basement (ibid., 128-129). Eventually entrepreneurial musicians developed bands which could play both popular and Irish music. This is not uncommon for musicians to play multiple styles, for example Don Messer also played old-time and popular repertoire (Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011). These bands would either switch players and/or instruments while some others had multiple contingents of musicians under the same ensemble name so they could play several venues a night (Moloney 1998, 129-135). The very large halls such as O’Donovan’s, where the McNultys played, could hire several bands per night and place them in different areas of the ballroom or on different floors or rooms (ibid., 132). At the Irish ballrooms of New York City, it was possible for musicians “to spend their whole careers playing Irish music without having to incorporate more than a handful of popular American songs and tunes into their repertoires” (ibid., 132).

Mick Moloney, who divides early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Irish-American music into four categories, places the McNulty Family into the “hybrid” section. I will outline these categories for the reader as the McNulty’s performed parts of all of them. The other



categories are “nineteenth century Anglo-Irish songwriters,” “Stage Irish” and “Irish ethnic recordings” of dance music and solo instrumentalists (Moloney 1982, 85, 87, 90, 93).

The first category of songwriters is represented by Irish tenors such as John McCormack (1884-1945) who rose to fame throughout the United States with a mixed program of opera and Irish songs. Moloney credits McCormack’s music as a “vital part of the cultural expression” of the newly forming Irish-American diasporic identity (ibid., 85-87).

Irish dance music was an important section of the recording industry featuring famous names such as accordionist John Kimmel, and fiddlers James Morrison, Michael Coleman and Paddy Killoran (ibid., 90). As discussed, it is these names which scholars have focused on in order to discuss lineage in today’s instrumental performance styles. The first to record in this genre was uilleann piper Patsey Touhey. He recorded private wax cylinders for friends and students, few of which survive (ibid.). Trew debates the “solo” genre label as the recordings were usually a lead instrument with piano or guitar accompaniment (2000, 306).<sup>125</sup> “Solo” recordings have continued to use backup instruments. For the same reason that *a capella* singing did not make it into the studio, the solo dance musician also requires accompaniment for a listening audience.<sup>126</sup> Thus, solo playing or singing is only appropriate in a personal context rather than in a mediated context.

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<sup>125</sup> Piano accompaniment for traditional music has never become popular in Newfoundland.

<sup>126</sup> Wilf Wareham noted in this dissertation on times in Harbour Buffett, NL, that singer Mack Masters asked to be accompanied when playing which was very unusual for that context. Wareham suggested that it was due to the presence of his tape recorder which elevated the normal performance to “radio status” and accompaniment would make it “sound more like radio songs” (Wareham 1982, 319).

The “Stage Irish” persona was one which Moloney states was “honed during two centuries in the English theatre” and was readily adapted to the music halls of 1920s New York (1982, 87). The character is one of an over-grown leprechaun, a happy talkative man who has obviously kissed the Blarney stone to enhance his naturally witty and heavily accented speech. He wears breeches, a waistcoat with watch and tails and can hold his drink whilst entertaining everyone in the room with jokes and songs that do not end until he gets into a brawl (ibid., 87-88). I note here that this is a reasonably similar stereotype to the “goofy Newfie,” without the full-blown leprechaun outfit.<sup>127</sup> Given that the McNultys were known for their costumed stage show, one might be tempted to file them under “Stage Irish” but as Byrne points out, while they did use elements of the “Stage Irish” stereotypes in their skits, they fit in best with Moloney’s hybrid category (P. Byrne 1991, 62).

The hybrid category is “characterized by a mixture of elements from the other three categories with a large dose of the popular American music of the day thrown in” (Moloney 1982, 93). Moloney continues to say that the category is:

Most fascinating of all for the social researcher, in that the multifaceted strands of Irish-American music taste are clearly illustrated by the wide cross-section of material that was popular through the years. The musical arrangements were usually the product of performers who earned their living...by playing for money at taverns, dance halls, weddings, parties and concerts. Hundreds of groups were formed, with a wide range of vocal and instrumental line-ups. (ibid.)

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<sup>127</sup> In response to a question if the Irish performed this stereotype of themselves I believe they did. My impression is that it was started as a negative stereotype in English theatre and then both embraced and rejected by the Irish themselves similar to the “goofy Newfie” stereotype. For example, one of the McNulty’s most famous skits was called “Danny Boy the Greenhorn” in which they played up two Irish stereotypes – the newly arrived rural bumpkin “greenhorn” immigrant and the cosmopolitan Irish-New Yorker (Grogan 2010g, AIA051).

Perhaps it was this variety which accounted for the McNulty Family's enormous popularity in New York and in Newfoundland. Moloney acknowledges that the McNulty "recordings have had a profound effect on New World Irish song repertoires in the 1950s, extending as far as the fishing villages of Newfoundland" (ibid., 94).

#### ***4.5.3 Irish Music Revival in the 1950s and 1960s***

Irish music in Ireland suffered a severe set-back due to the Irish Dance Hall Act in the 1930s. The Act restricted organized dances on the basis of morality questioning their morality. In 1951, *Comhaltas Ceoltari Éireann*<sup>128</sup> (CCE or *Ceoltas*) was formed in Ireland with the support of the government funds. Their primary goal was "to promote Irish Traditional Music in all its forms" (2000-2010, np). There are now branches of the CCE all-over the world, with the largest branch outside of Ireland based in Ottawa, Ontario. Interestingly there is no branch in Newfoundland, although one was attempted about ten years ago (Brophy and Brown 2008).<sup>129</sup> Henry delves deeply into the structure of the CCE including that of the competitions (1989, 68-75, 78-82). Fairbairn cites the *Fleadh Cheoil*,<sup>130</sup> also known as the All-Ireland music and dance competitions, which bring together many thousands of performers, as a major source of revival in great part through the sessions and informal meetings between musicians these events encouraged (1994, 582-584). Reiss notes that despite CCE's formation and work throughout the 1950s, traditional music was still largely ignored until the folk music revival of the

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<sup>128</sup> The Comhaltas website defines *Comhaltas Ceoltari Éireann* as the "Gathering of Musicians of Ireland" (2000-2010, np).

<sup>129</sup> This is discussed further in Chapter Seven, section 7.2.2.

<sup>130</sup> The Comhaltas website defines *Fleadh Cheoil* as "Festival of Music" (2000-2010, np).

1960s. Ceili bands formed earlier in the century and started becoming popular in Ireland in the late 1950s and 1960s (Fairbairn 1994, 579; Reiss 2003, 152). Composer Sean O'Raida had a major impact on the Irish music scene as he was the first to provide arrangements for traditional dance tunes rather than follow the ceili band standard of unison ensemble playing. O'Raida's attempts to bridge classical and traditional musics were not always appreciated by folk musicians, but they did eventually help inspire the arrangements of the Chieftains<sup>131</sup> and the Bothy Band<sup>132</sup> (Fairbairn 1994, 581; Reiss 2003, 152). The modern international phenomena<sup>133</sup> of the Irish music session arose during this revival period in both Ireland at the *Fleadhs* and in London, England with expat Irish musicians gathering together in pubs to play music. As they were all from different regions of Ireland and did not share a common repertoire, the tunes of Michael Coleman were adopted as a common shared repertoire and are now played internationally (Fairbairn 1994, 582-583). The members of Ryan's Fancy were a part of the 1960s Dublin revival when they immigrated to Toronto and New York.<sup>134</sup> Sessions in St. John's are briefly discussed in Chapter Seven. A more detailed study of St. John's session culture was completed by Anthropology student Samantha Breslin (2011).

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<sup>131</sup> The Cheiftains were officially formed in 1962 but didn't play together full time until 1975 (Chieftains ca. 2011, np). They are still active today almost fifty years later.

<sup>132</sup> The Bothy Band was an extremely influential Irish band which featured a lot of instrumental music. They were only officially together for four years (1975-1979) but in that time they released three albums which were heavily releared and played throughout the world. Please see (Wikipedia ca. 2011) for a band history.

<sup>133</sup> One can now attend Irish music sessions throughout Europe, North America, Australia and Japan.

<sup>134</sup> The Dublin revival is addressed through the experiences of accordionist James Keane in Chapter Six, section 6.2.

#### ***4.5.4 Celtic Music Revival of the 1990s and Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

When discussing Irish music, the term “Celtic” is often a topic of conversation. “Celtic” can be a contentious term which is both useful and detrimental to what many musicians wish to accomplish with their music. This literature review looks at the rise of “Celtic” music as a global term, the scholarly discussions surrounding it and the reaction of Irish and Newfoundland musicians. This review shows the difference in opinions arising around the concepts of Irish and Celtic musics. In general, Irish music is more acceptable as it is grounded in a place. Stokes has suggested that we are trained to think of music as being meaningful through its connection to place (1994c, 98). Celtic music is seen as removed from place and therefore not useful to many musicians. This discussion provides a background for the perceptions of Irish music by Newfoundland musicians discussed in Chapter Seven.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw an international Celtic revival which embraced many styles of western European-based music which were loosely grouped around the perceived ancestry of the ancient Celtic peoples from modern-day Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Galicia and their diasporas. In Canada, young fiddlers from Cape Breton, such as Ashley McIsaac and Natalie MacMaster, became enormously popular as they transitioned their dance music from the community hall to the stage context and worked with instruments common to rock bands. This venue change and development of a new aesthetic allowed them to access a new audience of younger Canadians who had little or no connection to the rural community music contexts of the past. The Cape Bretoners were only one of several groups of “Celtic” people whose music was launched onto the international mainstream stage during this period.

Celtic music and who plays it has a number of definitions. Fiona Ritchie, host of the National Public Radio show *The Thistle and the Shamrock* remarks in her book *The NPR Curious Listener's Guide to Celtic Music* that “pieces of music don’t come with zip codes” but it is the “feel” of the music that counts (2004, 3). However, she states for the purpose of her book she “place[s] ‘Celtic music’ among the traditional and evolving indigenous music cultures of the so-called Celtic countries and regions: Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, and Galicia and Asturias on the Spanish coast” (ibid., 2). In the foreword of the same book, internationally renowned fiddler Eileen Ivers states that Celtic music is localized and ethnically delimited:

[It] was and still is the *music of the people*- the cherished gift that, in its purest form, is passed from one generation to the next. It is traditional music from these relatively small nations that has survived through the years, even when outside forces tried to stifle it. Its diaspora thrived and influenced and merged with other forms of music through the years, thus making Celtic music ever so popular in today’s continually shrinking world. (2004, xi)

On the other hand, June Skinner Sawyers acknowledges the confusing definitions of Celtic music in her book, *Celtic Music: A Complete Guide*. Sawyers recognizes both the local and global linkages with Celtic music stating that the “best of Celtic music transcends cultural barriers and artificial distinctions” and is a “part of the global beat” (2000, 3). She acknowledges that Celtic music is sometimes a “synonym for traditional music” but not always, and suggests that the term is flexible enough to also encompasses the marketing that many musicians dislike (ibid., 4).

A major book in the area of Celtic Studies is *Celtic Modern: Music from the Global Fringe* published in 2003 (M. Stokes and Bohlman). *Celtic Modern* is a collection of scholarly articles which examine the many facets of Celtic music throughout

the world. One of the central questions of the anthology is *who* is Celtic, and *what* is Celtic music? These identity construction questions form the theoretical centre of all of the articles. It is clear this essay collection considers the Irish to be Celtic and I would argue that in general Irish and Celtic tend to be viewed as synonymous. These essays encompass Ireland, Scotland, Brittany, Wales, Canada, and Australia, but Ireland takes centre stage in terms of general references especially for diasporic discussions (G. Smith; Taylor; Trew). Generally, the British Isles (excluding Anglo-Saxon England) and Brittany are considered Celtic nations. Many of these essays engage the issue that the global is local but the local is not always global; or that, while Celtic music includes all of the above regions, music made in those areas is not necessarily Celtic (Bithel; G. Smith; Symon; Wilkinson). In this vein, Symon and Wilkinson point out that some Scottish and Breton musicians were surprised to discover they too are considered to be Celtic (Symon, 258; Wilkinson, 227). That said, Wilkinson makes a distinction and demonstrates how musicians move easily between the local Breton world of *fest noz* and the global world of transnational Celtic music as two distinct but compatible musical entities (226). The question of who qualifies as Celtic in the larger diasporic regions of the world such as North America and Australia is an important one. Smith and Trew argue the descendants of Irish immigrants in Australia and Ontario respectively hold onto their ancestral identity, and yet are quite selective about the elements with which they identify. For example, in Australia the construction of Irish identity attempts to leave behind Catholicism and, in Ontario the Orange Order has been transformed from a fanatical religious group into a community organization (G. Smith 2003, 75; Trew 2003, 100-105). This selectivity and inclusion or exclusion is important for the research under

discussion. Like the *fest noz* musicians, Newfoundland musicians also tour widely as part of the international Irish, traditional, folk, and Celtic music scenes to name a few categories. This volume shows the wide range of uses and music to which the term Celtic can be applied and begs the question of whether or not in its wide-ranging scope it is useful.

The North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo),<sup>135</sup> an academic conference and meeting of musicians, has produced three scholarly collections on fiddle music around the North Atlantic rim, *Play it Like It Is*, *Driving the Bow*, and *Crossing Over* (I. Russell and Alburger 2006, 2008; I. Russell and Guigné 2010). The idea of Celtic or Celticism is not a major issue in the anthologies and obviously does not resonate as a viable musical paradigm. In the 2006 collection, there is no reference to Celtic music at all; and in the 2008 edition Celtic music is mentioned only once in relation to the revival of Scottish dancing which, according to Shoupe was “fed by the emergence of ‘Celtic’ music as a category of world music” (2008, 117). Finally in the 2010 edition, “Celticism” is found as an entry in the index referring to three articles, but only one of these actually uses the word ‘Celtic.’ These uses refer to comparing across a broad spectrum of more localized repertoires. Sherry Johnson’s study considers the “interrelationships” between step dancing to fiddle music and hip hop; whereas Vazquez’s article describes the Galician fiddle style. The final article by Ronstrom does discuss different approaches to localized traditional or ‘Celtic’ music by pointing out that the standardized fiddle as a material instrument highlights musical differences as:

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<sup>135</sup> NAFCo has taken place in Aberdeen, UK in 2001, 2006 and 2010 and in St. John’s, NL in 2008.



The locally distinctive become visible only against a common, transnational or global background. The violin fulfils this role elegantly, being played everywhere in Europe, but everywhere in a distinctive voice. (2010, 268)

Thus, Celtic is a debated term and not simply accepted wholesale but unpacked and used to investigate other issues surrounding the categorization of traditional and other musical genres.

#### ***4.5.5 The C-Word: Problematizing “Celtic”***

“Celtic,” in general, and “Celtic music” in particular has become a marketing term which is the basis for many musicians rejecting the word, referring to it as the “C-word”<sup>136</sup> (Reiss 2003, 145). Sawyers admits that traditional music is often dubbed “Celtic” for marketing reasons and references to it result in “responses [which] can range from open hostility to weary resignation” from musicians (2000, 4). Ritchie offers this helpful insight, “for *traditional* musicians, connecting with the origins of their music is the priority; for artists identifying themselves loosely as *Celtic* it’s perhaps only a matter of interest while they explore other avenues for their music” (2004, 6). She asks whether or not “traditional Celtic music” is an “appropriate” label when it covers so many possibilities (ibid., 6). In this manner Ritchie seems to have really understood the thoughts of serious instrumental musicians in this area. I have asked many musicians what they think of Celtic music and they often respond that they believe that it is not a specific music but a marketing term that has more to do with “new age mysticism” and

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<sup>136</sup> While I have not recorded this specifically in interviews, I have heard the term “the C-word” used, in a derogatory fashion, in informal settings amongst musicians when the idea of “Celtic” music is discussed.

commercialization than their music. Newfoundland fiddler Colin Carrigan had the following to say about the concept of Celtic music:

Whatever it may have meant, it became “cheesified,” like...Celtic mist. I prefer calling it trad[itional]...[Celtic is] such a catch-all, everything from Lorena McKennitt to the Pogues and it just sounds a bit pretentious (2007).

Carrigan has performed at the well-known Cape Breton festival, *Celtic Colours* explaining that at the festival “everyone [is] from Galicia and Brittany and Scotland, and there’s a bit more definition to it” (ibid.). Irish musicians Séamus Creagh, Mick Daly and folklorist Marie-Annick Desplanques also agree that Celtic is a term used by non-musicians, while musicians are specific about the locale of their music. As Daly explained “Celtic music [is] a very broad popular kind of a term, a term that was never used and we wouldn’t think of using it” while Creagh added that they are more localized in their definitions of music (Creagh et al. 2007). Matt Cranitch, a fiddler and ethnomusicologist, known for his interest in *Sliabh Luachra*<sup>137</sup> music, concurred that the musicians he knows do not use the word “Celtic” when describing music and stated that:

Celtic music can mean a lot of different things simultaneously to different people. Some people mean it in a very specific sense I think... [like] Irish traditional music as we know it in a narrow sense. Other people mean Celtic music, to mean anything to do with Ireland including the kind of spacey new age layered sythn[esizer] kind of music, even what the Corrs do, and the music that is played for Riverdance. So I think the word Celtic can mean a huge amount of things. (2007)

When I asked Greg Walsh, another Newfoundland fiddler, about Celtic music he related this story:

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<sup>137</sup> *Sliabh Luachra* is location in border region of County Kerry, County Cork and County Limerick, Ireland.

I don't know what Celtic music is, I never heard the word until I went to a folk festival in Windsor Ontario and I saw the word Celtic...There was a band called Celtic Cross...I got up and sang a Stan Rogers song and two hours [later] they asked me to join the band. I'm in the band...and I'm thinking 'Celtic Cross? What does that mean?' (2008)

Each of these musicians question, or reject, the term Celtic as too broad, but I would argue that they find it a useful term through which they are able to further define the music that *they* are interested in. By setting up their music in opposition to Celtic music, they bring a sense of seriousness, professionalization and validity to their local music which, unlike Celtic music, is not commercialized or tainted by the glossy and misty stereotypes of Celtic marketing. As a globalized, geographically vague term "Celtic" is set up in juxtaposition to a localized music which is grounded in the context of its associations and sense of place.

In his article, "Traditional and Imaginary: Irish Traditional Music and the Celtic Phenomenon," Reiss states that:

The conflation of Irish, Scottish, and other styles enacted by the phrase "Celtic music" contradicts the local, regional, and national associations embodied in the music and its performance. But this creates a paradox: Celtic music embraces those traditional musics whose proponents reject Celtic as a category. At the same time, the Celtic label is used more and more frequently as an identity marker in the commercial world within Ireland, to promote both goods and services... Notwithstanding the rejection by insiders in the tradition, the existence of Celtic music as a global category cannot be denied. But the difference between it and the various traditional musics that constitute its core can and should be drawn. (2003, 145-146)

After speaking with many musicians I would suggest that instrumentalists are most likely to object to the "C-word." Musicians whose work involves more lyrics-based music are warmer to the idea of Celtic music as a genre. John Graham, co-owner of St. John's newest Irish bar, Shamrock City, simply equates Celtic music with Irish, but

interestingly, he thinks of the 1990s Celtic revival as being focused in Cape Breton (2008). Ralph O'Brien, founder of the Sons of Erin musical group and Erin's Pub in St. John's is ecstatic about Celtic music also equating it with Irish music. O'Brien stated in reference to Celtic music:

I love it well my dear, that's my life and soul. That's where my heart is... Celtic music, it's music of the people, it's folk music at its finest, it's storytelling, it's poetry. (2008)

Celtic as a general term has varying rates of acceptance between regions. For example, Celtic is a word not often seen in general life in Newfoundland whereas in Nova Scotia it is on many signs and is quite commonly used for goods and services.

"Celtic," as a label, offers the opportunity to investigate and examine issues of mass media and place in regards to global versus local musics. The rejection of the trans-national and non-localized term Celtic shows how important a sense of place is to the musicians in this study, that to them traditional music(s) have homes to live in, people who play that music, and locations or multi-locations which they inhabit and travel between. Thus a non-spatially grounded term such as "Celtic" is used to delineate insiders and outsiders to the specific local tradition(s) which are encompassed under the rubric of Celtic culture.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Although I do not use the term "Celtic" often in this dissertation I do use it to refer to the revival of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. I thought it important to acknowledge the term and discuss how my informants feel about its use.

#### ***4.6 Conclusions***

This wide-ranging chapter has set out a background upon which the case studies might be read and understood in terms of the influences and attitudes surrounding Newfoundland music. I have set out a brief history of how radio, television and recordings have developed and interacted with music from the province and how this development fits in with larger musical revival trends in the western world. Despite being a remote island, compared to the urban centres of North America, this chapter has shown that Newfoundland was neither technologically nor “sonically isolated” from trends and revivals happening elsewhere in Western Europe and North America in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Newfoundlanders and Newfoundland musicians have long participated in both their own localized expressive cultures and maintained cosmopolitan musical tastes at the same time.

**Chapter Five:**  
***The Musical Routes of the McNulty Family:  
Ireland, New York and Newfoundland***

***5.1 Introduction***

The decades surrounding Confederation saw major changes in almost every aspect of Newfoundlanders' lives. The first half of the twentieth century was a roller coaster ride of political definitions as Newfoundland moved from being a British colony to an independent country, then to the benevolent dictatorship of the Commission, and finally, into Confederation with Canada. Joseph Smallwood held office as the province's first premier for 23 years from 1949 until 1972, and during his tenure he effected massive change. In the interest of taking advantage of Canada's social programs, Smallwood advocated a resettlement program whereby the residents of isolated outports moved to growth centres where greater infrastructure was concentrated and education, health care and income assistance were available. As Pocius notes, resettlement uprooted thousands of people and reorganized their sense of community and place (2000, 20-21). Smallwood also advocated for large industrial projects, many of which failed. Life quickly modernized in post-Confederation Newfoundland as roads were built and telephones, electricity, and indoor plumbing spread across the island.

Throughout these changes, the Devine family produced a radio show (ca. 1944-1974) highlighting the music of a New York based Irish-American group called The McNulty Family. The radio programs were popular and influential at a time when Newfoundlanders' perceptions of what constituted suitable local musics for broadcast

were still forming. The McNulty Family recordings prominently featured the diatonic button accordion and regularly brought the mother, daughter, and son group into the soundscape of Newfoundland homes. In 1953, the group toured Newfoundland for two months to sold-out shows across the island. I contend that, due to J. M. Devine's preference for their music, the McNulty family had a major influence on the Newfoundland recording industry, and subsequently the nature of Irish music within the Newfoundland music tradition at large. Unlike other popular musicians who toured or distributed records within the province, the McNulty Family had a continuing and consistent presence in the Newfoundland soundscape which reached beyond their own performing career.<sup>139</sup> This chapter outlines the influence the McNulty Family had on Newfoundland repertoire as well as how mass media played a vital role in their music's dissemination.

During a period of great change in Newfoundland society spanning WWII, Confederation, and resettlement, the McNulty Family music was consistently available through the *Big 6* radio show. Through the Irish-American song genre they sang of the love of family, the importance of loyalty to one's homeland, and comedic themes all with a background of accordion dance music and tap dancing. Their music became part of the fabric of the Newfoundland soundscape, a type of music that Newfoundlanders expected to hear on their radios, and in turn, became a part of Newfoundlanders' musical sense of place, whether or not they were personally a fan of the group. Many Newfoundlanders felt so akin to the group that when Jack Kellum and Ryan's Fancy sought Eileen

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<sup>139</sup> Peter McNulty died in 1960. Anne and Eileen continued to perform with Eileen's son, Jim but their active career as a musical group began to decline in the 1960s (Grogan, pers. comm. 2010).

McNulty-Grogan for an interview in the mid-1970s, there was immense confusion about whether or not the McNultys were actually Newfoundlanders (Kellum 2010). This is not just an amusing piece of trivia. The assumption that the McNultys were Newfoundlanders not only illustrates their importance and inclusion in Newfoundland music, but how electronic mass media can contribute to imagined community development and place-making. The McNultys essentially became Newfoundlanders through their radio play. Their songs and tunes are still re-recorded today by local musicians and considered to be part of standard Newfoundland repertoire. In 2011, Shanneyganock, a St. John's based group released a McNulty Tribute Album. This chapter presents detailed information which has not previously been gathered together regarding the McNulty Family tour of Newfoundland in 1953 to build a picture of the McNultys' impact on Newfoundland music. It shows how they balanced a cosmopolitan career and image with rural values and nostalgia. It also gives insights into the touring of musical groups in the province during this time period.

## ***5.2 The McNulty Family<sup>140</sup>***

The McNulty family was an Irish-American group comprised of a mother, daughter and son: Ann (1887-1970), Eileen (1915-1989) and Peter (1917-1960) respectively. Ann McNulty was born Ann Burke in Kiltreeven, Roscommon, Ireland. At age 23 she immigrated to the United States. Shortly thereafter, she met her future husband John McNulty (1887-1928) in Boston. In 1928, John McNulty died of lung cancer, leaving Ann a widow with two young children at the start of the depression. By

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<sup>140</sup> Please see the Appendix One for detailed biographies.



that time, the family trio had already been performing in the New Jersey and New York area and after John's death it became their full-time occupation. Eileen McNulty, who was a dancer and singer, married John Grogan. Grogan became the mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey. In 1971 she went to Ireland to qualify as an Irish dance teacher. Peter McNulty was a singer and violinist. He served in WWII, earning a Bronze Star. Peter McNulty died of lung cancer in 1960 at the age of 43 (Grogan 2010f).

### ***5.3 Overview of the McNulty Family Musical Career***

According to folklorist Pat Byrne, The McNulty Family was well-known as a performing group by 1928 (1991, 62). An overview of their career shows that they had their own radio show called *The Irish Showboat* on WWRL in New York, and for sixteen years (1935-1951) their stage show of the same name regularly sold out at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) (P. Byrne 1991, 62; Coyne 2000, 97; see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). Starting in 1939 Peter McNulty wrote a column for the New York based newspaper, *The Irish Advocate*. During the war years his mother wrote the column in which she often included letters from her son (Grogan 2010a, 2010f). Although they began performing radio and ballroom shows during the 1920s, it was not until 1936 that they recorded their first 78-rpm-disc on the Decca label (P. Byrne 1991, 62). Between 1936 and the late 1950s they recorded 155 titles on Decca, Standard and Copley with re-issues on Colonial and Coral (McGraw 2010b; Ruppli 1996, 173-777). [For a list of recordings please see Appendix Four]. The group's career centred around New York City and the nearby Rockaway Beach and the Catskills in the summer, with tours to Boston, Chicago, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and PEI (Coyne 2000, 97; Dolan 2009, 14-15, 22;

Grogan 2010a; see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). By the late 1950s, the group was still in demand; for example, they were booked “at one club for three years, performing four shows a night, six nights a week” with out-of-town performances as well (McNulty-Grogan 1975).

Eileen returned to St. John’s in 1975 to appear on the *Ryan’s Fancy* television show. During her visit she did an interview with Pat Byrne.<sup>141</sup> Eileen explained that when they started performing on stage “everything was rather relaxed” (ibid.). She remembers her father building stages complete with steps and curtains so they could practice (ibid.). As they grew up her mother’s philosophy towards performing became quite formal. Ann felt a public entertainer should “present [him/herself] as a performer... [and] she presented in a very elegant fashion” (ibid.). Ann sought to distinguish herself from the “party type” or stereotyped stage Irish performer (ibid.). According to Eileen, her mother insisted on an elegant and high class act while at the same time maintaining the “purity and the simplicity and the beauty of the traditional music and the songs” (ibid.).<sup>142</sup> Ann McNulty always performed in an evening gown. As one might expect Peter appeared in top hat and tails; however Eileen was frequently seen in tails as well. As feminist vaudevillian scholar Allison Kibler explains female cross-dressing in vaudeville, circus and black face acts was one of the standards of the day (1999, 89-91).

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<sup>141</sup> I am greatly indebted to Dr. Pat Byrne who gave me permission to use this interview for my research. It is listed in the bibliography under McNulty-Grogan.

<sup>142</sup> Many of the McNulty Family shows occurred in venues where rough behaviour was common. During an interview with Mick Moloney, fiddler Ed McGowan (b. 1935) recalled that seeing the McNulty Family perform in the 1940s at the Leitrim House in “Irishtown.” McGowan remembers both the shows and the area being quite “rowdy.” (Moloney 2003, 119-123)

When the family started performing publicly, Peter and Eileen were too young to appear on the vaudeville circuit so they performed in Irish ballrooms and churches instead. Eileen gives a sense of the atmosphere at these ballrooms:

At the time that we were...first starting out, there was a very famous place in New York City on 59<sup>th</sup> street...known as Donovan's Hall. That was the place where everybody who came over [from Ireland] congregated...There was dancing from the top, from the roof to the bottom....[There were] a great many ballrooms in those years...where they played the waltzes and all the Irish music. Of course, that was sort of the circuit, you would play the different ballrooms and the different bands would be playing, there were many musicians. It is a little difficult to remember their names...Paddy Killoran, and Jim Morrison and there were the Flannigan Brothers at the time and many, many others. Then, of course, there were the church performances, all the churches would have Irish nights, and so forth during the year. (1975)

Once they were old enough for vaudeville they booked a trial run at the Palace Theatre, the “peak” performance venue for vaudevillians.<sup>143</sup> Tragically, it was also the same week in 1928 that John McNulty died (ibid.).

For a while the McNulty Family performed on radio with other groups.

Sometime between 1929 and 1931 the McNulty Family started their own radio show called *The Irish Showboat*. The introduction included a tune of the same name and an announcement which called listeners as follows:

All ashore who's going ashore, we're about to take a short pleasure cruise aboard the little Irish showboat piloted by the McNulty family and as the little green and gold craft steams up the bay we hear...[music starts]. (see J. Fitzpatrick 2001)

From the radio show came the stage show, the *Irish Showboat Revue*. As Eileen remembers the show was popular:

Well, the first time we put it on [at the] Brooklyn Academy of Music, we had [the] Music Hall and that was a fairly large hall...Of course, it was sold out and there were people clamouring to get in. So, the second show which mother

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<sup>143</sup> Please see Appendix Three for a list of locations of venues mentioned in this dissertation.

called...*The Irish Showboat Revue*...we took the Opera House which is a big house...beautiful house and we put on our *Irish Showboat Revue*. We would probably put on six or so each season and that went on for sixteen years. (1975)

The McNulty Family were not the only performers on the bill. An examination of the programs ranging from 1936-1950 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) reveals that there were acts from singers, dancers, musicians and comedians. For example, Tuck and Trix, a contortionist and his dog, appeared regularly for several years. There were several acts which became standard in the show so the line-up was well set and the audience knew what to expect. The McNulty Family themselves appeared several times performing songs, dance routines and skits in each show (see Grogan 2010g, AIA-051).

#### ***5.4 Musical Repertoire***

The McNulty Family repertoire covered a wide range from aurally transmitted ballads learned by Ann as a child to comedic songs to newly composed songs and Irish-American tunes. While all of these categories made an appearance much of their repertoire was largely based in the traditional song and tune repertoire with which Ann grew up. In the United States her repertoire expanded to include Irish-American and vaudeville pieces. Eileen explained that her mother first taught her children's songs she had learned as a child in Ireland. This maintained the cross-generational musical transmission in which Ann had been raised. Ann, however, took this a step further. Besides relying on her memory, Ann also did "a lot of research" to find other old songs, such as "Highland Mary" which Eileen stated she "dug up out of the past" (McNulty-Grogan 1975). They were also gifted with songs from older entertainers such as Sean O'Nolan and Pat Powlin and John Madigin. These well-known singers "gave" them

songs such as “Mother Malone” and “The Flower of Sweet Travan.” Some of Eileen’s favourite songs were “Rose of Aranmore,” “Exile of Cork,” “John Mitchell,” “The Moon Behind the Hill,” “Jackets Green,” and “The Hills of Glenswilly” (ibid.).

Ann and Peter wrote material for the act and also put music to lyrics they received. Peter wrote the lyrics for “The Likeable, Loveable Leitrim Lad” while Ann wrote “Susan O’Malley” and “Tea Time in the Meadows” (ibid.). Songs for which they arranged music to existing lyrics include “Roses of Aranmore” and “When I Mowed Pat Murphy’s Meadow.” The latter contained lyrics written by Newfoundland businessman, J. M. Devine, who asked the McNulty family to write music for the poem and record it (J. M. Devine 1949, 1950b). The overall nature of their music was intended to associate them with Ireland rather than New York in the minds of their listeners, whether those listeners were in New York, Ireland or Newfoundland.

Ann played accordion and collected so many of them that she eventually gifted several to various musicians. At the time of research in 2010, the family still had two Superior button accordions, and a Baldoni, and researcher Ted McGraw has had the two Walthers refurbished. There are at least three more accordions owned by a musician in Ireland and another was being fixed in Galway (L. Byrne 2010; Grogan 2010d; McGraw 2010d).

### ***5.5 The McNulty Family on Record***

In 1936 the McNulty Family of Ann, Peter and Eileen were invited to record on the Decca Label. Later, they moved to Standard and Copley with re-issues on Colonial and Coral. They continued recording until the late 1950s.

According to Ruppli's Decca discography, the McNulty Family recorded at least 91 titles with Decca between 1936 and 1942 and a further twelve in 1947 making a total of 103 songs (Ruppli 1996, 173, 211, 297, 311, 326, 342, 394, 409, 437, 475, 485, 580, 638, 686, 777). During their first session on November 10, 1936, they recorded five songs and one tune: "The Stone outside Dan Murphy's Door," "Polly O' the Automat," "The Half Door," "Mother's Silver Curl," "Master McGraw," and "The Hills of Donegal" (ibid., 297). This was followed with three sessions each in 1937 and 1938, two each in 1939 and 1940 and one each year in 1941 and 1942. According to Ruppli's discography they took a break during the war and resumed in 1947 with two sessions in March and one in December (ibid.).<sup>144</sup> Recording, in general, slowed down during WWII as the shellac needed for records was unavailable and the strike by the American Federation of Musicians advocated a ban on recording over the issue of royalties (Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011; Trew 2000, 307). Many record companies stopped their smaller series such as the "ethnic" or "race record" series during this period (Gedutis 2004, 152; McGraw 2010a). According to McGraw, the McNultys also recorded a few "Irish pop numbers with a modern orchestra," and a further four titles which did not make it into the studio, on Decca (De. 2963) in 1939 just before Peter was drafted (2010a).<sup>145</sup> The Decca Irish 1200 series featured 214 artists, of which only ten were women, most of whom only cut a couple of tracks (Spottswood 1990, 2737-2869). Through my examination of the Irish

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<sup>144</sup> The reason for leaving Decca is unknown at this point, but was likely due to the phasing out of the Irish 1200 series around 1950.

<sup>145</sup> In the Archives of Irish America collection there is a full box of handwritten orchestral scores which may have been used in these recordings (AIA-051).

recording catalogues it would seem that Ann McNulty was the most recorded female instrumentalist of her time.

### ***5.5.1 The McNulty Family, Newfoundland Songs and Standard Records***

Newfoundland businessman J. M. Devine (1876-1959) began broadcasting McNulty Family music on sponsored radio shows in Newfoundland around 1944.<sup>146</sup> In 1949, J. M. Devine, sent Ann McNulty the words to “When I Mowed Pat Murphy’s Meadow” in hopes that they might turn his poem into a song (J. M. Devine 1949). Ann was “delighted” with the poem, calling it a “typical McNulty number” (A. McNulty 1949).<sup>147</sup> Letters recovered from the Grogan and Devine family show that by 1950 J. M. Devine and Ann McNulty were in negotiations with the Standard Label to record the song (J. M. Devine 1950a, 1950b). Neither McNulty nor Devine were acquainted with Standard (J. M. Devine 1950b). Nevertheless, the McNultys recorded their first eight songs with Standard on October 12, 1950 and signed a one-year contract (ibid.).

Devine’s first letter to Mr. Demitriades of Standard Records in New York<sup>148</sup> stated that he was following up on Ann McNulty’s submission of “When I Mowed Pat Murphy’s Meadow” (J. M. Devine 1950a). Apparently, the record executive was “not

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<sup>146</sup> The Devine and Doyle families were both from King’s Cove, Bonavista Bay and were quite influential in both business and cultural circles. Gerald S. Doyle, the song collector and businessman, who published song books, was a cousin of the Devines. P. K. Devine (1859-1950) has been noted for his book *Devine’s Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions, Their Origin and Meaning* which was funded by Gerald S. Doyle and offered a basic dictionary of Newfoundland words, weather lore and superstitious phrases (1937).

<sup>147</sup> Ann McNulty was known as a business woman who did all her own managing. There is room for further investigation into her management of the group.

<sup>148</sup> The copy of the letter I have, which is the copy sent to Ann McNulty, was not on the official Big 6 letter head and did not have Standard Records in the mailing address or body of text, however, I gleaned he was a record executive for Standard from the contents of both letters.

very favorable to the proposition” and Mr. Devine wished to inform Mr. Demetriades that he did not have permission to record the song with any other artist (ibid.).<sup>149</sup> Devine was, however, “prepared to give [him] exclusive control providing that we are compensated for it. We shall be pleased to accept from you the usual compensation” (ibid.).

The tone of the letters is of one businessman speaking to another. Devine’s decision to feature McNulty Family music on his radio show was obviously a deliberate choice in order to equate his business with their fame, an association in which he was willing to invest. Devine presented the following argument to Demetriades for protecting his interests. Through the recording of “Pat Murphy’s Meadow,” Devine was seeking both financial and artistic return on his investment:

Of course, many musicians and record makers are desirous of getting “Pat Murphy’s Meadow,” but I wish to confine the song to the McNulty’s, as we have popularized their numbers in this country. We operate two radio programs every week costing thousands of dollars for advertising, and we exclusively feature the McNulty songs over the Canadian Broadcasting System, C B N. We have endeavoured to give the people in the way of music what they like, and we have found that the McNulty songs are most popular. Consequently, we would like to have the McNulty’s record “Pat Murphy’s Meadow” as it is in keeping with many of the numbers that they play. (ibid.)

Devine was making the reasonably safe gamble that both his personal and corporate reputation would be bolstered by a famous group recording his song. Beyond the

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<sup>149</sup> Devine did approach a different executive about having it recorded. While the letter is not dated, one must assume it was prior to the 1950s letters. The letter from Mr. Sebok states that he has received the words to the “Irish song” and will “contact one of our Irish artists to discuss recording possibilities.” It is also evident from J. M. Devine’s correspondence that the poem had been published prior to 1948 since a request was made in the “Queries and Answers Column” of the New York Times and a letter sent to the editor by A.P. Kueller to give more information about the poem’s author. (Kueller 1948; Sebok ca. 1950)



practical demonstration of a proven audience, Devine provides extra confirmation that the song will be well received:

If I say so myself, although I am the author, I think the song has much to recommend it. There is pathos in every line and a great depth of feeling. These characteristics are much appreciated in our sea girt isle.

Anticipating that we shall have the pleasure of hearing this song over our radio program, and wishing you a large measure of success, with very kind regards, I remain

Sincerely yours,  
J. M. Devine  
(1950a)

The tone in his subsequent letter to Ann McNulty is not as conciliatory regarding Mr.

Demitriades. It seems they both regarded him with some suspicion. Devine wrote:

It is very difficult to understand the situation. The gentleman has sent me no contract and I have never heard from him. You are right when you say the man does not know or appreciate what he is getting in the McNulty Family. (1950b)

At the same time he reconfirms with Ann his wish for them to record the song; he also shows that he does not entirely trust Standard:

Whether there is one or ten thousand of these records made I want one anyway with your voice and Eileen's supplied. It is my conviction that the song is very much in keeping with the sentiment of many of your numbers, and I feel that you will do it justice....I would very much like you to have my song recorded on Oct. 12 with your other eight numbers... I sincerely hope you have not made a mistake and that you are linking with the right organization. You have the written permission as you stated to Mr. Demitriades to record "Pat Murphy's Meadow" for Standard.

In closing, I again repeat I want to hear the song sung by the McNulty [*sic*] Family and if the Standard does not protect its rights then I shall be compelled to hand it over to some other reputable institution. (ibid.)<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> There is a tone in this letter which suggests a familiarity with Ann, either personally or through correspondence. It is possible they corresponded frequently as it seems there was almost daily mail service between New York and St. John's at the time. Ann's letter was dated October 8<sup>th</sup>, his October 10<sup>th</sup> and Devine expected her to receive it in time for her October 12<sup>th</sup> recording session! Surely the service is not so quick 60 years later!

The McNultys did record “When I Mowed Pat Murphy’s Meadow” for Standard (McGraw 2010b). The Grogan family are still inundated with requests to this day for “Pat Murphy’s Meadow” (Grogan 2010c). The McNultys recorded 11 other songs for Standard on 78, later re-released on a Colonial LP (McGraw 2010b). These songs were released as *12 Authentic Irish Songs*, or more correctly 11 Irish songs and 1 Newfoundland song (McNulty Family 1950).

Interestingly, when *12 Authentic Irish Songs* was re-issued on Colonial (LP 121) ca. 1959 under the same title, they changed the cover art from a picture of the McNulty Family in the outline of a shamrock, to one of a small boy and girl with a donkey and cart (Standard Phono Company 1959, 36). McNulty fan, Monty Barfoot, once found a postcard from Connemara, Co. Galway with the exact same picture named “Collecting Turf in Connemara, Galway” (2010). I would surmise that the record company wished to equate the values held in the music with the ideas of rural innocence, nostalgia and purity as evoked by the postcard which on the back read:

Collecting turf in Connemara. In Ireland today there are still vast stretches of the ancient, romantic land where the old ways are still the best. In Connemara the patient donkey brings home the turf sods which have been skilfully cut and will warm the thatch cottage of the fisher-farmer during the winter ahead. Cartwheels sink in the soft bog but the donkey’s dainty feet pick their way daintily and efficiently. (Hind n.d.)

The use of this picture is in clear juxtaposition with the previous photo on the album.

The original cover was of the group in gowns and tuxes looking very cosmopolitan and stylish and matches the fast paced life and the bright lights of New York (Grogan 2010g, AIA051). This is juxtaposed by the traditional nature of the repertoire heard on the

record, thereby creating an interesting reading of traditional music in an urban setting. I view the new picture as similar to a rebranding of the group. The old picture had a multi-locational nature to it. The shamrock referred to Ireland but the clothing to New York. The second picture replaces the urban associations with a “romantic land” in which life moves slowly like the turf donkey. By denying the McNulty Family their diverse appeal, the rural setting picture also ignores the complex musical experiences of Irish-Americans in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***5.5.2 The McNulty Family on Copley Records***

The McNultys’ association with Standard was short-lived. They likely signed with the Boston company Copley Records in 1952 since they appear in their 1953 catalogue (McGraw 2010a). According to discographer Ted McGraw, they recorded 41 titles with Copley, re-recording many of the titles they had previously pressed with Decca. Apparently Copley insisted on a studio piano accordionist who tended to change key in the middle of the tune, much to Ann McNulty’s disgust!<sup>151</sup> (ibid.). I assume the addition of the piano accordionist was to keep with the ensemble practices of the time, in which the piano was used prominently in other groups. As Ted McGraw stated:

“Ma” was furious that the traditional sound of her button accordion, for which the McNulty Family was noted, was being cast aside for marketing reasons. The record company’s aim was to increase sales by including more variety, provided in this case by multiple key changes that could be easily played on a piano accordion, but would have been difficult on the single row button accordion. (McGraw 2010e, 463)

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<sup>151</sup> Ann played the diatonic button accordion which is limited to one or two keys. Thus, if she wished to change key she had to change instruments.

It was with Copley that the McNultys recorded the Newfoundland song “Star of Logy Bay” which they likely learned during their 1953 tour and set the lyrics to the tune of the “Hills of Donegal” which they recorded in 1936.

Copley recorded and issued McNulty music in several formats and were one of the label’s last recording artists. As McGraw explained:

The McNultys were on the second last Copley single issued,...The 41 tracks on the Copley label were actually issued on 5 different types of media: 26 on 78s, 22 on 45s, 24 on 45 EPs, 36 on albums, and later in 1992, 26 of those tracks were [later] issued by Rego on Copley cassettes. (2010d)<sup>152</sup>

The Coral label reissued an LP with many of the tracks from the Decca masters appropriately named *The Irish Showboat*. On the back cover it read as follows:

The Irish Showboat, exciting highlights of which are heard on this album with the magic passport that carried Ann “Ma” McNulty and her family from a little local auditorium in Kiltkeevan, Co. Roscommon Ireland to New York’s famous Radio City Music Hall. In Irish Showboat we find a generous offering of irresistible Irish sentiment, rollicking humour and fine unadulterated [music], [more] educated than we’ve come across in some time. (McNulty Family n.d.)

Again it would seem that the McNultys were trying to establish a balance between big city sophistication with their stage attire while also maintaining the authenticity of their small-town Irish roots.

### **5.6 J. M. Devine, the McNulty Family and the Big 6 Program**

J. M. Devine was responsible for much of the McNutly Family’s air time in Newfoundland through his sponsored *Big 6* shows which ran twice a week from about

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<sup>152</sup> Monty Barfoot, a fan and collector of McNulty recordings and paraphernalia, claims that there was at least one release of McNulty material on 8-track but he was not able to obtain it for his collection (Barfoot 2010). I have not found other evidence of 8-track releases.

1944 until 1974. The following sections will examine the interaction between the McNulty Family and J. M. Devine, including radio play and record sales.

### ***5.6.1 J. M. Devine and the Big 6***

In 1921, J. M. Devine moved to New York with his family to be trade commissioner for Newfoundland under the government of Richard Squires (1919-1923) (P. Byrne 1991, 61). Although his family lived in New Jersey, Devine's office was based in New York (Devine A., pers. comm. 2010). By 1932, he had moved back to St. John's where he opened a clothing store at 6 Adelaide Street. In 1936 he relocated to 339 Water street renaming his store The Big 6 and using the slogan, "Once a Number, Now an Institution" in his ads (P. Byrne 1991, 61). Throughout his life, Brendan Devine (1915-2010), J. M.'s son, was reminded of this slogan several times a month by former customers (2010). The store closed in 1974 at which time Monty Barfoot went and bought many of the leftover 78s and LPs for a dollar each (Barfoot 2010).

### ***5.6.2 The McNulty Family on the Big 6 Radio Show***

Devine learned of the McNultys in the late 1930s through his New York contacts, and began importing their records for sale in The Big 6 (P. Byrne 1991, 63). In the 1940s Devine sponsored a radio show which featured their music and continued to air for over thirty years on various stations (ibid.).<sup>153</sup> According to previously mentioned letters written by J. M., in 1950, there were two radio shows a week into which he invested

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<sup>153</sup> Brendan Devine stated that the radio show ran for 15 years before his father's death in 1959, and as the new owner Brendan continued the show for another 15 years until the store closed (2010). This puts a start date at around 1944.

significant advertising monies gaining a return on that investment in record sales. In a letter to Ann McNulty he impressed upon her how popular her group was with Newfoundlanders:

You will be pleased to know that the McNulty records over our radio program are going over bigger than ever. We are selling many of them in the store, and many orders are reaching us from all over the country for them. One reason why the McNulty records have attained such popularity in this country is the concentration we have given them. Every Friday evening at 9 P.M. Canadian Broadcasting System, CBN features the McNulty songs, and every Saturday morning there is an entire half hour given over on Station VOCM to the singing of McNulty songs. Small wonder then that dealers in McNulty records here are besieged with orders for them.<sup>154</sup> (1950b)

The statistics on radio access worked in his favour. In 1953, “over eighty thousand” homes had access to radios accounting for over 80% of the island’s population (*Sunday Herald* 1953, 11). Dave Maunder, who worked for VOCM in the mid-50s, remembers that the Big 6 store would send up an album of 78s with a rough script for the program including the wording for Big 6 advertisements (Maunder, pers. comm. 2010).

The *Big 6* program was not the only radio slot which played McNulty music. A show on VOCM sponsored by O’Brien’s Music Store called *Shillelagh Showtime*, which opened with a version of the “Irish Washerwoman” performed by the Irish All Stars also played McNulty music regularly (Barfoot 2010). The *Newfoundland Wholesale Program* and *Newfoundland Soiree* also played McNulty material (ibid.). However, the *Big 6* program was the listener’s source for McNulty music and the Devines received angry letters if the percentage of McNulty numbers declined (ibid.).

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<sup>154</sup> Devine’s continued use of the term “country” in reference to Newfoundland and Labrador illustrates how new Confederation with Canada was at the time.

Through their mail order catalogue Brendan Devine stated that The Big 6 filled about fifty general orders a day (B. Devine et. al. 2010). These included McNulty records, ordered in sets of five, and shipped in specially made wooden sleeves (see their catalogue in A. Devine 2007, MUN07-019).<sup>155</sup> Besides the Big 6, the McNulty records could be bought at Dicks Music Store on Water Street, RB Record Store at Rawlins Cross and Hutton's Music Store (Barfoot 2010).

### ***5.7 Irish and Glamorous: Advertising the McNulty Family Show in St. John's***

J. M. Devine met the McNulty Family at an artist's luncheon in New York and in 1953 he sponsored the McNultys' Newfoundland tour (McNulty-Grogan 1975). Throughout the advertisements and reviews for the Newfoundland tour there was a balance between two images: the bright lights images of New York and the hard-working values of rural Irish roots.

The first advertisement for the tour was heard on radio on March 30, 1953 when the following was broadcast:

To our many friends in Newfoundland we are very happy to tell you that we are coming your way very shortly... We are being booked into Pitts Memorial Hall by our very good friend, and your well-known, theatrical promoter Ron A. Young. We will be in St. John's for a special engagement starting Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> to open our Newfoundland tour. Our concerts in St. John's will be sponsored by Mr. J. M. Devine, the Big 6, who for a number of years [has] featured the McNulty Family records on his broadcasts. We are looking forward to our visit to your country and hope to sample a bit of the hospitality for which Newfoundlanders are

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<sup>155</sup> Each of the catalogues had a run of about 2,500 copies which were distributed around St. John's and in the outports to facilitate the brisk mail order business. Each catalogue had about 18 pages which included records. The catalogue was drawn up by Brendan Devine. He could only recall records being broken during shipping once. Devine found it surprising that they travelled so safely whilst being shipped all over Newfoundland and up to Labrador (2010).

so well-known...Of course, Ma will be there with her accordion [Ma strikes up playing and lilting]. (see A. Devine 1975, MUNFLA 75-083)

Apparently the McNultys appeal to Newfoundlanders “hospitality” was taken quite seriously. When the McNulty Family arrived in St. John’s on Monday April 20<sup>th</sup> aboard the steamship *H.M.S Newfoundland*, they were greeted by hundreds of people complete with brass band (P. Byrne 1991, 63).<sup>156</sup> The McNultys started their shows one week later and toured the island for eight weeks. They performed in St. John’s, Bell Island, Whitbourne, Carbonear, Harbour Grace, Bay Roberts, Clarendville, Bonavista, Gander, Grand Falls, Buchans, Corner Brook and on the Port-au-Port Peninsula to sold-out crowds.<sup>157</sup>

The McNulty shows, advertised by radio, posters and newspaper, were a huge success in St. John’s. The radio show, which ran twice a week, covered the largest demographic. It was supplemented with a downtown poster campaign which featured a picture of the family outlined in blue, purple, green or orange with a white background and the show dates (Barfoot 2010). There were at least two different posters. One poster showed a picture of the McNultys on one side, and Irish tenor Franklin Wade with guitar on the other side. The middle of the poster advertised a “3 hour show” including films (see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). [Please see Figure One below.] It was standard practice to show films before 1930s vaudeville shows and the McNultys took up this practice again

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<sup>156</sup> The brass band was either the CLB band or the Mount Cashel band (Barfoot 2010).

<sup>157</sup> Eileen’s husband John Grogan was inaugurated as mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey in May of 1953; so Eileen flew home on May 8<sup>th</sup> and returned on May 17<sup>th</sup> to continue the tour (Grogan 2010e; McNulty-Grogan 1975).



for their Newfoundland tour. [Please see Figure Two below.] They did not, however, use films in their own BAM shows (ibid.).

**SPONSORED BY J. M. DEVINE OF THE BIG SIX**

**6 NIGHTS Starting Mon. April 27th - PITTS MEMORIAL HALL**

**"The Royal Family of Irish Entertainers!"**

**IN PERSON**

**The McNULTY FAMILY**  
(MA, EILEEN and PETER)

**Nationally famous on Records, Radio, Stage & TV**  
**in a Program of**  
**your Favorite Irish Music, Songs and Dances**

**ONE COMPLETE**  
**3 HOUR SHOW**

**INCLUDING IRISH HEARTS MOVIE**  
**MADE IN DUBLIN**

**Also: Featuring a Program of Songs You Like to Hear**  
**FRANKLIN WADE**  
**Formerly of the World's Famous Dublin Trio**

**ADMISSION: 75c - \$1.00 - \$1.50**

**Advance Ticket Sale at HUTTON MUSIC SHOP**

Figure One: April 1953 St. John's Concert Poster (ibid.) [Courtesy of the Archives of Irish America.]

A second poster seems to advertise only the films and not the musical show since it does not mention the McNulty Family or Franklin Wade (ibid.).



Figure Two: April 1953 St. John's Film Poster (ibid.). [Courtesy of the Archives of Irish America.]

The second poster is hand drawn and promises “All New Authentic Gems from the Emerald Isle!” giving the audience the opportunity to enjoy three different films.<sup>158</sup>

There was a “full length drama produced in Dublin” called *Irish Hearts*. Another film offered the audience the experience to “re-live again scenes from the ‘ould sod” and a third showed the story of Thomas Davis “Ireland’s Immortal Patriot” (ibid.). This poster has Pitts Memorial Hall written across the top giving the same date (April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1953), as the McNulty Family Show although it does not mention the musical aspect of the evening. This second poster clearly situates the films in Ireland. As the opening act for the musical show, New York would likely be forgotten in favour of the strong Irish context. This issue comes across in the reviews as discussed below.

In the newspapers, the McNulty show was embedded within larger Big 6 advertisements, thereby linking the shows directly to the store. In ads running from April 1 to 18, 1953 there were simply small text boxes encouraging readers to buy tickets.<sup>159</sup> The biggest newspaper ad came on April 24 and 25 in which the upper half of a full page ad for J. M. Devine’s Big 6 store was given over to promoting the show. It read as follows, followed by 100 McNulty titles readers could procure from the Big 6:

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<sup>158</sup> This same poster with a different location was used in PEI during their tour there later in 1953 (Grogan 2010g AIA-051).

<sup>159</sup> Starting April 1, 1953, the shows were advertised in the regular J. M. Devine Big 6 advertisements which showed up regularly in *The Evening Telegram*, one of two of St. John’s daily newspapers. The April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> ads contained a small box which simply read, “The McNulty Family are coming to town April 27<sup>th</sup> Watch for them!” (1953g, 14). On April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> the wording changed slightly reading, “Make your plans now to see the McNulty family Irish review coming to St. John’s April 27” (1953e, 10). In a slightly larger box on April 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> the promotion read “The McNULTY FAMILY REVIEW starts APRIL 27<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are going fast. Be sure to get your reservations early at Hutton’s Music Store” (*Evening Telegram* 1953b, 16; 1953c, 19).

MCNULTY FAMILY IN ST. JOHN'S

Popular Irish Singing Troup [*sic*] Arrived Monday

Aboard the "R.M.S. Newfoundland," Accompanied by well-known Irish Tenor Franklin Wade [all caps]

They open up their Irish Song and Dance Revue

MONDAY EVENING APRIL 27<sup>th</sup>

at the Pitts Memorial Hall for 6 consecutive evenings

Tickets are on sale at Hutton's Music Store, 222 Water St.

An outstanding [*sic*] show has been arranged by these talented artists who are featured on television and radio shows in New York.

The sponsor wishes them a very pleasant and hospitable stay in Newfoundland.

J. M. DEVINE

McNulty records on sale At the Big 6

(*Evening Telegram* 1953d, 19; 1953f, 12)

The advertisement below (Figure Three) appealed to an audience member's desire to see a group from New York. This ad also refers to the McNultys' radio promo spot in which said that they were looking forward to experiencing Newfoundlanders' hospitality. Of course the large list of McNulty titles not only gave the reader information about the 100 titles the Big 6 had available for sale but the type of music they might expect to hear at the show. As discussed in sections 5.10 and 5.11, this list also gives insight into the impact the Big 6 choice of stock had on the subsequent Newfoundland recording repertoire. The Big 6 stock influenced both what Newfoundlanders ordered through the mail and what they heard on the radio, as the *Big 6* program was comprised of the store's inventory.

# McNULTY FAMILY IN ST. JOHN'S

EILEEN McMAHON  
 THE GALWAY ROGUE  
 MY OLD HOME TOWN  
 MY OWN DEAR GALWAY BAY  
 TACK OF BARLEY  
 JEROW  
 EILEEN  
 ALL FORGIVE AND P'LL TRY TO  
 FORGET  
 THE BOYS OF THE COUNTY CORK  
 McNULTY'S IRISH SHOW BOAT  
 PRIORITARY, THE HAPPY COP  
 THE OLD HOUSE FAR AWAY  
 M SIGHING TONIGHT FOR  
 KILLARNEY AND YOU  
 ACK TO DONEGAL  
 IRELAND, BOYS, HURRAH!  
 LICKING SKIPPER  
 ET MR. McGUIRE SIT DOWN  
 IGHLAND MARY  
 HE LIVED BESIDE THE ANNER  
 EVIN BARRY  
 WHEN I MOWED PAT MURPHY'S  
 EADOW By J. M. DEVINE  
 N IRISH GREETING  
 OUND OUR OLD COTTAGE HOME  
 IN OLD IRELAND

## McNULTY RECORDS ON SALE AT THE BIG 6

IN OLD BALLYMOE  
 THE GROVES OF KILTEEVAN  
 THERE'S A SWEETHEART  
 WAITING FOR YOU  
 AT THE CLOSE OF AN IRISH DAY  
 THE GOLDEN JUBILEE  
 DAISY BELL  
 TIPPERARY DAISY  
 SHAMUS O'BRIEN  
 THE ROSE OF ARANMORE  
 THE LIMERICK RACES  
 MISS FOGARTY'S CHRISTMAS  
 CAKE  
 A MOTHER'S LOVE  
 SUSIE O'MALLEY  
 FAR AWAY IN AUSTRALIA  
 MOLLY BOWN  
 MICKEY HICKEY'S BAND

## Popular Irish Singing Troup Arrived Monday ABOARD THE "R.M.S. NEWFOUNDLAND," ACCOM- PANIED BY WELL KNOWN IRISH TENOR FRANKLIN WADE

They open up their Irish Song and Dance Revue  
 MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 27th,  
 at the Pitts Memorial Hall for 6 consecutive evenings  
 Tickets are on sale at Hutton's Music Store, 222 Water St.  
 An outstanding show has been arranged by these talented  
 artists who are featured on television and radio shows  
 in New York.  
 The sponsor wishes them a very pleasant and hospitable  
 stay in Newfoundland.

J. M. DEVINE

MY SWEETHEART  
 THE FOGGY DEW  
 WHEN IT'S TEATIME IN THE  
 MEADOWS  
 IRISH SOLDIER BOY  
 BARNEY O'HARE (From the County  
 Clare)  
 THE OULD SUNDAY DINNER  
 HILLS OF GLENSWILLY  
 DRUM COLLIHER

THE HALF-DOOR  
 THE STONE OUTSIDE DAN  
 MURPHY'S DOOR  
 POLLY O' THE AUTOMAT  
 MOTHER'S SILVER CURL  
 MISS McLOUD'S REEL—PHILIP  
 O'BEIRNE'S DELIGHT  
 TELL HER I AM—RICHARD  
 BRENNAN'S FAVORITE

KERRY LONG AGO  
 GRANDFATHER BRIAN  
 MOTHER MALONE  
 HASTE TO THE WEDDING  
 O SON REMEMBER MY LOVE  
 TODAY  
 GOOD-BYE JOHNNY DEAR  
 THE THIEF OF THE WORLD  
 KNOCK AT MY WINDOW TONIGHT  
 LOVE  
 LIGHTNING EXPRESS  
 SHIP THAT NEVER RETURNED  
 MOLLY BAWN AND BRIAN OGE  
 THE GRAVE OF PETER CROWLEY  
 THE LITTLE HOUSE UNDER THE  
 HILL  
 THEY SAILED AWAY FROM  
 DUBLIN BAY  
 THE KELLYS  
 McDONNELL'S OLD TIN ROOF  
 DENNY McCALL  
 DUNLOE FAIR  
 I NE'ER LOVED ANOTHER,  
 BUT YOU  
 JOHN MITCHELL  
 I DON'T WORK FOR A LIVING  
 AMBER TRESSES TIED IN BLUE  
 O'BRYAN HAS NO PLACE TO GO  
 KELLY THE BOY FROM KILLAN

SONG OF THE 32 COUNTIES  
 A MOTHER'S LAMENT  
 SLIPPIN' THE JIG  
 I DON'T CARE IF I DO  
 COTTAGE WITH THE HORSES  
 O'ER THE DOOR  
 FAIR SLIGO THEE I NOW MUST  
 LEAVE  
 COME IN OUT OF THE RAIN  
 BARNEY McSHANE  
 OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY  
 WE'LL TAKE YOU BACK TO  
 IRELAND  
 THE MAID OF THE SWEET  
 KNOWE  
 SHALL MY SOUL PASS THROU  
 OLD IRELAND  
 THE DAWNING OF THE MORN  
 BARNEY BRANNIGAN  
 ERIN'S GREEN SHORE  
 THE REAL OLD MOUNTAIN DE  
 MY BEAUTY OF LIMERICK  
 THE OLD POTATO CAKE  
 LET YE ALL BE IRISH TONIGHT  
 WALTZ ME AROUND AGAIN  
 WILLIE  
 WALKER WALKED AWAY  
 CHRISMAS IN EXILE  
 THE RIVER MOY

Figure Three: April 1953 the Big 6's Advertisement for McNulty Family Recordings (see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). [Courtesy of the Archives of Irish America.]

This ad was followed by a reminder in the bottom left hand corner of their Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> ad which read as follows:

6 Big Nights

From Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> to Saturday May 2<sup>nd</sup> The McNulty Family and Franklin Wade (Irish tenor) present their BIG VARIETY SHOW with some authentic films taken in Ireland.

The Evening's entertainment will appeal to everyone- *Don't Miss it.* We are very fortunate in having such a talented troupe come to St. John's.

Besides singing some lovely Irish and Scottish songs you are in for a real treat with plenty of tap dancing, accordion playing, piano, violin and some Irish dances. The costumes of the performers are outstanding.

The Place: Pitt's Memorial Hall (opposite Paramount Theatre)

The Time: 8:15 p.m. – Monday through Saturday

The Price: 75 c., \$1.00, \$1.25

Reserved Tickets: on sale at Hutton's Music Store, 222 Water Street

The McNultys are famous on records, radio, stage and television. They also compose many songs. The BIG 6 (sponsor) has all their popular records on sale at 339 Water St. (*Evening Telegram* 1953h, 7)

This ad sought a broad appeal, soliciting both those seeking a famous group from New York and an audience that liked traditional music forms. Clearly, these shows had something for “everyone”! In case an audience member did not like ballads, there was dance music to be had. If that did not impress, there was sheer star power, a ‘be there and be seen’ social event. For those wary of fame or tradition, it was re-iterated that the McNultys were capable of composing their own songs. The ad also places the McNultys in two seemingly juxtaposed contexts. The advertising attempts to balance the image of cosmopolitan New York stars and their performance as musicians and dancers from small town Ireland.

The response to the concerts was overwhelming; people were turned away from each show. Throughout the week, J. M. Devine added small reminders in his ads to purchase tickets. It is unclear if the shows sold out in advance or at the door, but Devine maintained the urgency for ticket sales throughout the run. One assumes that to leave potential audience at the door only increased the prestige of the event. The ads on April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup> read:

McNulty show

Have you seen it? You still have time get your tickets at Hutton's music store now  
Don't miss it! Saturday evening is the last performance in St. John's  
Many seats available at door – show starts at 8:20pm – at Pitts Memorial Hall  
(Opposite Paramount Theatre)  
(*Evening Telegram* 1953f, 12; 1953g, 14)

Finally in early May, the Big 6 simply thanks all its patrons by saying “The Big 6 Appreciates your patronage of the McNultys and wishes one and all an hour of genuine happiness” (*Evening Telegram* 1953c, 19; 1953e, 10; 1953i, 5). The show was so popular that they added more shows the following week and, Devine advertises them in the classifieds. The following ad appeared on May 2:

STOP THE PRESS!

By Popular Demand, the MCNULTY FAMILY and FRANKLYN WADE  
Show will be presented for 2 more nights next week.

WEDNESDAY MAY 6<sup>TH</sup>

THURSDAY MAY 7<sup>TH</sup>

Advance sale at Hutton's Music Store.

(This will not interfere with their schedule performance in Bell Island Monday and Tuesday)

THE BIG 6 LTD (*Evening Telegram* 1953k, 29)<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> The ad on May 4<sup>th</sup> was plainer, simply reading, “MCNULTY SHOW Reserved Seat Tickets go on sale today at Hutton's Music Store for Special Return Performances Wednesday and Thursday (this week)” (*Evening Telegram* 1953l, 17). The ads on May 5<sup>th</sup> were fancier with a scroll-like border to catch the eye and read:

According to Brendan Devine, even more people were turned away from the added shows which also sold out (2010).

The advertising drew on widespread appeal by offering everything from the McNultys' fame and success in New York to their Irish roots and variety of performance styles (dance and songs). Considering the turnout the advertising obviously worked. I suspect that there were also radio spots in the week between their arrival and the opening of their show which would have also drawn in many people.

### ***5.8 Construction of Place in the Shows and Reviews***

The McNulty show presented in Newfoundland was a variety style but with fewer acts than their BAM shows. The opening act of the touring show was Irish tenor, Franklin Wade who was accompanied by local pianists.<sup>161</sup> Scenic film footage from Ireland, shown by "projectionist Mr. Williams," was featured before the opening act. The bulk of the show was comprised of McNulty Family acts which included singing, instrumental tunes and tap dancing (*Daily News* 1953c, 7). Although the films seem to have had separate advertising, neither the films nor the tenor made as big an impression as the McNultys themselves. Wade and the films only get a passing mention in reviews. Accordion player and devoted McNulty fan, Frank Maher, saw all eight shows in St.

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MCNULTY SHOW After packing Pitts Memorial Hall to capacity 6 BIG NIGHTS last week, they will be brought back for 2 MORE NIGHTS this week WED. & THURS. ONLY" (*Evening Telegram* 1953j, 21)

<sup>161</sup> In St. John's and Bell Island Wade was accompanied by Mr. Al Pittman and in Harbour Grace region Mrs. L. Pike did the honours. Pittman did not continue across the island. I believe they hired local pianists as they travelled.



John's and does not recall either the tenor or the films (2010). Interestingly the films were not highlighted in the Big 6 advertising.

Ann was known for her strict management of the group image and rehearsals. Donny MacDonnell, a dancer in the BAM shows, noted that they rehearsed regularly until everything was to Ma's satisfaction (MacDonnell 2010). To my surprise this also extended to touring reviews. I discovered during my second research trip in March 2011 that the following review which I quote extensively was written by Ann herself! Although it was not signed, I found an identical review with names and places changed for their show in Charlottetown, PEI later in 1953 (see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). At first I was shocked! Writing your own review is simply not ethical today, but upon consulting hundreds of other clippings in the AIA I began to recognize the standard hyperbole and rhetoric used to describe performers during that era. Everyone was "famous" or "world-renown" whether they had been performing for two weeks or twenty years. There was no earning these titles, you simply assigned them to yourself and grew into them. As Mick Moloney explained at the McNulty Tribute Concert the "Famous McNulty Family" was famous before anyone had ever heard of them! (2011, March 11).<sup>162</sup> I now believe that this review was more marketing than review considering it appeared in the *Evening Telegram* the morning following the opening night. I also believe that it is reasonably reflective of the concert experience considering they added more shows the following week. Although unconventional for today it shows what Ann thought would be

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<sup>162</sup> I believe there is further interesting research to be done investigating Ann McNulty as an early female entrepreneur and artistic manager as well as the general rhetoric of vaudeville performers.

important for potential Newfoundland audiences. It gives information about the group and the themes she wished to emphasize.

A number of different themes come up in the review by Ann McNulty. These motifs include Ann McNulty's glamorous gowns, how hard the family worked physically, their ability to evoke emotional responses from their audiences, and overflowing houses. I reproduce this review at length to give the reader an idea of the general tone of the reviews, as other reviewers followed suit and picked up these same themes:

Mother, sister and brother McNulty went over with a bang last night at Pitts Memorial Hall as they sang, danced, played and joked themselves into the hearts of a packed house to open their week's tour here.

From the moment the silver haired mother Machree walked out on the stage attired in a stunning mauve gown that set off her lovable Irish smile, until the applause died away from the hilarious and personable brother Peter and his vivacious partner in fun, sister Eileen, the audience was transposed with happiness.

With mother squeezing beautiful and nostalgic Irish airs out of the three accordions [*sic*] she had hanged around her. Eileen and Peter jiggled out in front of the mike with tunes that brought everything from smiles to tears to their loving audience. They did everything with a hint of Erin from "Miss Fogarty's Christmas Cake" to "Shall my Soul Pass Through Old Ireland" and back again. The perspiring performers, worn completely out from giving their all with toe taps, jigs and dynamically putting their songs across, bowed gracefully out until this evening. (*Evening Telegram* 1953o, 18)

According to this review not only were the members of the McNulty Family good entertainers who engaged their audience, but hard-working Irish people not afraid to break a sweat as well as "graceful" and cosmopolitan with Ma's "stunning smile" which was also a "loveable Irish smile." This is the very picture of hard-working immigrants who have succeeded in the new world. Through hard work, and keeping a connection with their roots, they have found fame and glamour. This is a complex, yet compelling,

combination of traits for performers. Throughout the reviews and advertisements for this tour, there was a delicate balance struck between the glamour of New York and the perceived values of hard-working people with rural Ireland roots. This review not only illustrates what Ann McNulty thought were the critical ingredients for a good show but it also confirms my analysis that she was combining their New York glamour with the image of hard-working Irish immigrants.

Unlike later depictions of traditional musicians in Newfoundland in the 1960s and 1970s, who presented an everyman persona, such as Harry Hibbs with his salt and pepper cap, the McNultys sought to balance a nostalgic effect with high class status. Women were noted in the Irish-American community, and in vaudeville, for being socially mobile. This caused debate within both communities as Irish women sought to move from working class to “lace curtain” Irish (Diner 1983, 9; Kibler 1999, 58). Ann McNulty was certainly amongst the class conscious and was noted for her glamorous gowns and the “elegance” she demanded in performances (McNulty-Grogan 1975). Reviewers often noted Ann’s fashion sense as much as her musical prowess. In the McNulty Family show there was room for being both Irish and classy, whereas the usual New York Irish music scene was known to be raucous.

The show provoked a great emotional response in the audiences. General comments about the effect of the McNulty performances in Newfoundland were that one song “rolled them in the aisles” while another song caused “many a handkerchief to be wielded by the throng” (*Daily News* 1953c, 7). It was predicted that in St. John’s and on Bell Island the audience “will hold the memory of the lovable McNulty family in their hearts for years to come” (*Daily News* 1953c, 7). These sentiments reflect the themes in

their songs which ranged from nostalgic songs about leaving Ireland to comic song skits involving acting. It is not surprising that the emotions in the McNulty songs struck a chord with a Newfoundland population which has a history of leaving home to seek employment.

Dance as a show-stopper was often commented on by the newspapers as a physical display of traditional skills. In the early 1950s, many of the community dances would have still been regular occurrences where step dancing displays were common. In my research, I was told that it was primarily men who step danced in Newfoundland and Kristen Harris-Walsh and Wilf Wareham found the same situation (Harris-Walsh 2009, 204; see Osborne 2008b, MUNFLA 2008-002; Wareham 1982, 177). In this context talented female step dancers were likely an impressive novelty. One reviewer was particularly fascinated with Ma McNulty and wrote the following about her performance:

Ma McNulty was an angelic picture in her beautiful pink gown and silver hair as she played a set of accordions to background her singing son and daughter... only once on the night's series of vocal and instrumental treats did Ma McNulty desert her assortment of accordeons [*sic*] to perform a dancing jig and then she had the audience rising in applause and choruses of "more, more." The silver-haired lady won a special place in the heart of the onlookers without saying a word. (*Daily News* 1953b, 3)<sup>163</sup>

In Bell Island the crowd went "wild when Ma McNulty ended off the show with a tap dance" (*Daily News* 1953c, 7).

Eileen and Peter's talents did not go unnoticed either. Eileen, who was "very much enjoyed" on Bell Island, was described in St. John's as follows:

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<sup>163</sup> I cannot be entirely sure that this review was not written by Ann McNulty, however after reading her writings it is my impression that this was likely written locally but inspired by earlier reviews by Ann.

Pixie-eyed [Eileen] McNulty stole the hearts of the audience the moment she stepped on stage. With an effervescent smile that crossed the footlights and tugged at your heart strings she had the music lovers at times deep in reverence and at times swinging to the educated tap toe gymnastics which she brandished gleefully. (*Daily News* 1953b, 3)<sup>164</sup>

Peter's role in the performance was described as follows:

Peter McNulty, the male portion of the talented family, vocalized with sister [Eileen] in a nostalgic set of tunes. He also played the violin and piano to accompany the tap-toeing of [Eileen] and Ma. His jazzed up version of "Fogarty's Christmas Cake" rocked the house and was probably one of the most approved numbers on the programme.<sup>165</sup> (ibid.)

The high demand for tickets and line-ups of disappointed fans was a major theme in the press. Tickets were sold for both reserved seats and general admission. And even on the repeat performances there were dozens of people outside waiting to get into the packed hall. Brendan Devine estimated that Pitts Memorial Hall could hold 150 people, one can then estimate that at least 1200 people saw the show over the eight evenings (2010). However, the financial report suggests that the hall must have been much bigger. They collected \$6,490.90 worth of tickets over eight days, making an average of \$811.36 per day with tickets ranging from \$0.75 to \$1.50 (see A. Devine 2007, MUN07-019). These figures allow the audience to range from 540 people up to over 800 with a likely average about 675.<sup>166</sup> This could have allowed about five thousand people to see the show! According to Brendan Devine:

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<sup>164</sup> Local reviewers often mixed up Eileen and Ann's names. There seemed to be some confusion regarding Ma's (Ann's) identity. Both of them danced while only Eileen sang.

<sup>165</sup> This spelling of "programme" is used in the original source. In general, I have elected to use the North American spelling of "program."

<sup>166</sup> There is a slight discrepancy here as the newspaper ads say \$1.25 whereas the poster says \$1.50. A picture of Pitts Memorial Hall can be viewed at the following website (McNaughton ca. 2012, np). Pitts Memorial Hall is the building with the ladder to the roof.

The auditorium was filled with people and a couple of dozen people standing outside can't get in, no more seats, sorry come back tomorrow. So they'd come back tomorrow, the five nights, it was so packed that there were people waiting outside to get in. And some of them never did get in; get to see them, so they were quite popular. (2010)

Everywhere they went they played to sold-out halls, reviews regularly told of crowds turned away at the door and phrases such as "capacity audience," "filled to capacity," and "largely attended," (*Daily News* 1953c, 7; *Evening Telegram* 1953m, 17; 1953n, 32; 1953o, 18; 1953p, 18). A pre-show article in Grand Falls noted that:

In almost every instance the halls have not been equal to the number of people seeking to hear the famed music group and hundreds have been turned away. It is hoped that the use of the huge Grand Falls Stadium will permit everybody to hear these great singers. (*Grand Falls Advertiser* 1953, 2)

In 1975, Eileen remembers the crowds as being:  
just marvellous and wonderful audience[s], oh so heart-warming. I mean, you couldn't help but give with audiences like that. All over!...the crowd was so tremendous...so many turned away and it could've kept on for eight days and still people were turned away! (1975)

She also found the audiences responsive and familiar with the music:

Pat Byrne- did you find in your performances here...a lot of the songs...were recognized quickly by the audience?

Eileen McNulty Grogan- Oh yes!...I guess they had been hearing the records for some time, but the feeling of the music was just so suited to Newfoundlanders, but it seemed as if they knew them anyway. (ibid.)

The familiarity went both ways. One review stated "it was like welcoming an old friend to the fans who have grown to love the McNulty Family through the years" (*Daily News* 1953b, 3).

Reviews of their shows were always positive and flattering. J. M. Devine and promoter Ron A. Young were credited with bringing them to the island (ibid.). The link

between the McNultys and Devine was strong and one review stated that “John M. Devine...is a lover of the McNultys and close friend from way back” (ibid.).

This examination of the reviews of concerts and advertising for the McNulty tour reveals that they successfully played up being both glamorous and sincere. While some of the reviewers had the shrewd marketing hand of Ann McNulty guiding them, others independently seemed to have enjoyed the show.<sup>167</sup> In the long term the hard-working, sincere, down-to-earth values have remained in people’s minds as many listeners felt that they somehow knew the McNulty Family and counted them as Newfoundlanders. There was a familiarity that was not felt with other visiting performers which is why I chose to examine their influence in Newfoundland. The McNulty Family not only illustrates the connection between Newfoundland and Irish-America but also how electronic mass media can give the sense that geographically distant performers are close which adds to one’s musical sense of place.

### ***5.9 Touring Newfoundland around Confederation: The McNulty Family Spring 1953 Newfoundland Tour Route***

The McNultys arrived in St. John’s on Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1953. They remained in Newfoundland for six to eight weeks. [Please see Map Six below.] The following sections detail their tour for the interest of McNulty fans that do not have access to this information. The McNulty Family was not the only group to tour the province in this time period. Country stars Doc Williams, Hank Snow and Wilf Carter all toured in the 1950s. Both Hank Snow and Doc Williams have written accounts of their Newfoundland

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<sup>167</sup> An in-depth textual analysis of reviews of this time period would likely reveal quite a bit about how reviews were structured including the acceptable balance of criticism vs. marketing.

travels in 1949 and 1952 respectively which will give the reader an indication of travel in Newfoundland at the time (Snow et al. 1994, 311; Williams and Smik 2006, 54).<sup>168</sup> Both arrived in Port-aux-Basques by ferry and traveled by train to St. John's because "there was no highway across Newfoundland at the time" (Williams and Smik 2006, 54).

Williams gives a little insight into the conditions of travel in Newfoundland at this time:

All they had was what they called Newfoundland Bullet. That was an English style narrow gage [*sic*], I guess it would be called, rail train.... We rode all night, all night long clickety-clack, clickety-clack all the way to St. John's and the next day for about 27 or 28 hours.... Meanwhile we had put our station wagon into a boxcar and they took it all the way over with us to St. John's. We needed the station wagon to get around in St. John's. In the towns there were roads but there were no roads that connected the towns (*ibid.*).

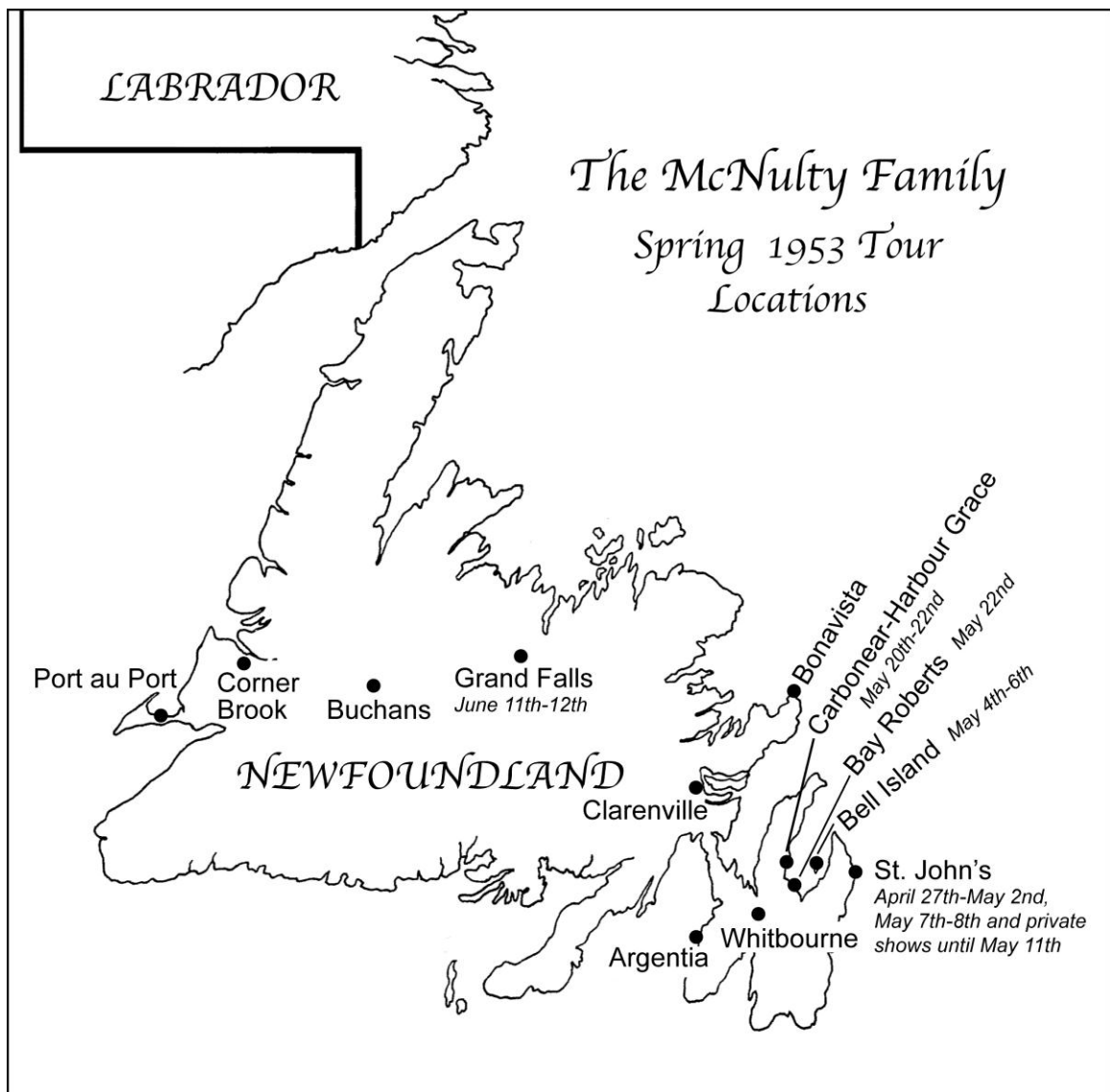
Both Snow and Williams found it necessary to promote their shows by radio. The audiences increased after Snow's appearance on CJON (1994, 311). Similarly Doc Williams went on VOCM and CJON to publicize his shows and with good results (Williams and Smik 2006, 54). Williams played around St. John's and Gander before heading to the west coast to Corner Brook, Deer Lake and back to the ferry at Port-aux-Basques (*ibid.*, 55).<sup>169</sup> Williams noted the loyalty of Newfoundland audiences stating that, "to this day, fifty years later, the folks in Newfoundland still remember us... the baby boomers who grew up listening to our music. And they've never stopped remembering us" (*ibid.*, 54).

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<sup>168</sup> Williams also toured in 1971 but did not enjoy it as much as audiences were not as attentive and talked through the show (Williams and Smik 2006, 57).

<sup>169</sup> Interestingly Williams noted that they were still paid with Newfoundland currency as it was so soon after Confederation (*ibid.*). Philip Hiscock has noted that Newfoundland switched to Canadian bills in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but that Newfoundland coins were still in use up until about the 1940s (*pers.comm.* 2013).





Map Six: The McNulty Family: Spring 1953 Tour Locations

### 5.9.1 St. John's

The McNulty Family was booked for six evening shows in St. John's between Monday April 27<sup>th</sup> to Saturday May 2<sup>nd</sup> with return performances on the evenings of Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup> and Thursday May 7<sup>th</sup>. The concerts were held in Pitts Memorial

Hall, part of Holloway School, between Harvey Road and Longs Hill.<sup>170</sup> Pianist Al Pittman<sup>171</sup> was hired to accompany singer Franklin Wade (*Daily News* 1953b, 3). They also made appearances at an Elks Club meeting on May 11 and at Brendan Devine's Lions Club (see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). On Thursday May 7<sup>th</sup> they attended the Sergeant's Mess at Buckmaster's Field from which there is a rare live recording in existence! (ibid.).<sup>172</sup>

During their time in St. John's the McNultys rehearsed and walked about the town as tourists (B. Devine et al. 2010). Brendan Devine explained that, "they were interested in St. John's and they travelled the stores and they picked up a few things that they liked" as any tourist would (ibid.). The McNultys went to dinner at Brendan Devine's house a few times and Mrs. Devine stated that they were "delightful" guests and people "just like us" Newfoundlanders (ibid.). This is not surprising as Brendan explained that "my father and the McNultys... had a very good relationship" and J. M. "really enjoyed being with them" (ibid.). From a 1949 letter we know J. M. found Ann to have a "dynamic personality" (J. M. Devine 1949). A note in the society pages says that the family also attended a going-away party at Brendan Devine's house (Grogan 2010a; see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). A slightly rougher side of their characters was shown when Brendan Devine admitted that Peter, as a former boxer, "liked to fight" and that Ma loved beer

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<sup>170</sup> Holloway School and Pitts Memorial Hall have since been torn down. There is a large dirt parking lot there now. Entrances for the Hall were on Harvey Road, across from the Paramount Building, and from Long's Hill.

<sup>171</sup> I have, so far, been unable to find out who this Al Pittman was. He is not, however, the same Al Pittman (poet/writer) who worked on the Ryan's Fancy show although he may be a relative.

<sup>172</sup> This live recording was used during an unspecified radio program and is about ten minutes long. The audience is very animated and appreciative (Grogan 2010g AIA-051).

(2010).<sup>173</sup> Apparently, the latter fact became known and one of the local beer companies sent over a few cases to her at their hotel! (ibid.). Peter also spent some time at the Harbour Inn, a pub near the end of Duckworth Street. Local fiddle player, Pat DeBourke remembers meeting him there:

I was talking to him [Peter McNulty] in the Harbour Inn, McNulty....They were coming here from Ireland...and came down to the Harbour Inn one morning... and he was over sat to the bar on the stool and he went over, Tom Kearsey, and he said 'Pete, I want you to meet a good friend of mine' and I shook hands with him and I was there talking and I said I listen to your records and I really like your singing and this and that and your show and your mother played the accordion. (see Hiscock 1985, MUNFLA 85-040)

### **5.9.2 Bell Island**

Between the two St. John's runs the McNulty Family went to Bell Island in Conception Bay, a small island with an important iron ore mine. There were two evening shows on Monday and Tuesday May 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> with a matinee on Tuesday and a special show for the miners of "Shift B" at 10am on Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup> (*Daily News* 1953c, 7).<sup>174</sup> On Bell Island they played at the Church Lads Brigade (CLB) Armoury and were sponsored by the Bell Island Regional Library Board. Nonetheless one reviewer acknowledges and gives special thanks to J. M. Devine and the Big 6 for arranging for the McNulty Family to come to Newfoundland (*Daily News* 1953a, 5; 1953c, 7).

It seems they took a one-week break while Eileen returned to New Jersey for her husband's inauguration as mayor of Hoboken. There are also unconfirmed reports that

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<sup>173</sup> Monty Barfoot also noted that Peter was known to be a boxer (2010)

<sup>174</sup> There may have been some mix-up however as the May 2<sup>nd</sup> paper stated that the matinee would be Wednesday afternoon (*Daily News* 1953a, 5).

they played two shows on the Southern Shore the week after St. John's, and a show at the American base in Argentina (Barfoot 2010; B. Devine et al. 2010; Grogan 2010e).

### ***5.9.3 Whitbourne and Conception Bay North***

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, the McNulty Family performed a matinee and evening show in the Roman Catholic parish hall in Whitbourne, a junction point for the Newfoundland railway (*Evening Telegram* 1953n, 32). Two days later they were in the Carbonear-Harbour Grace area with a demanding performance schedule of five shows between Wednesday and Saturday, May 20-23; one matinee in Carbonear, two evening concerts in each of Bay Roberts and Harbour Grace and an additional matinee in Harbour Grace (*Evening Telegram* 1953a, 17; 1953m, 17; 1953p, 18). These concerts were not sponsored by J. M. Devine but by the local Bay Roberts Red Cross. In Harbour Grace the sponsors were Canadian Legion and Mr. W. T. Walters (*Evening Telegram* 1953m, 17; 1953p, 18). A Mrs. L. Pike accompanied tenor Franklin Wade on this leg of the tour (*Evening Telegram* 1953p, 18).

### ***5.9.4 Bonavista and Central Newfoundland***

I have not yet been able to find reviews of concerts between May 24 and June 11, but the *Grand Falls Advertiser* spoke of concerts in Clarendville, Bonavista, Gander and Buchans (*Grand Falls Advertiser* 1953, 2). The only local musician to perform with them who was not a pianist was accordionist Wilf Doyle who joined them in Gander for a week or two; yet, this is not mentioned in the papers (Benson 1996, 14; see Posen and

Taft 1973, MUNFLA 73-45). The Grand Falls shows were June 11 and 12 with a possible matinee added on Saturday June 13th (*Grand Falls Advertiser* 1953, 2).

#### **5.9.5 West Coast**

Up until my in-depth research of the McNulty Family at the AIA, I had not heard from anyone that the McNultys travelled to the west coast of the Island. However, upon closer examination and some help from Eileen's daughter Pat Grogan I discovered that they did indeed go to Corner Brook and Port-au-Port with a possible trip onto Nova Scotia and PEI. They gave a number of appearances in Corner Brook at the Columbus Hall and also went to the West Coast Sanatorium to the delight of the patients (Grogan 2010a). They left on Thursday May 25 to travel to Port-au-Port for another performance where they were met by an unwelcome legal writ from the Supreme Court of Newfoundland (Grogan 2010a; see Grogan 2010g, AIA051). Despite the glowing reports of their concerts island wide, their promoter Ron A. Young claimed their contract committed them to paying a booking fee of \$300 for their entire Island tour. He alleged that the McNultys cut him off after their Bay Roberts concert and refused to perform a second time in Clarenville (Grogan 2010a).<sup>175</sup> According to the hand-written financial statement prepared by Devine for the concerts in St. John's, Ron Young was indeed paid his fee (see A. Devine 2007, MUNF07-019).<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Family descendants, such as her granddaughter Patricia Grogan, still speak about how angered Ann was at this allegation.

<sup>176</sup> According to the financial report from the St. John's shows Ron A. Young was paid 10% of the profit after tax deduction which amounted to \$584.18 (A. Devine 2007, MUN07-019).

### ***5.10 The McNulty Family's Influence on Newfoundland Music and Musicians***

From their radio tenure, through their 1953 tour, and even today, the McNulty Family has had a great impact on the music of Newfoundland. On April 28, 1953, the day after their first performance, there was a sales run on accordions at O'Brien's Music Store on Water Street (see J. Fitzpatrick 2001). In 2008 Gordon O'Brien of O'Brien's Music still received requests for McNulty Family recordings music. This store has made digitized versions of the 78s available on CD (McNulty Family 2001a, 2001b, 2001c). Not only did the McNultys sell out their 1953 shows and provide good record sales for local companies; they inspired musicians to re-record their music time and time again.

In the 1970s, Wilf Doyle's contact with the McNulty Family still held a special place in his memory. As previously discussed in Chapter Four, section 4.4.3 Wilf Doyle recorded the first Newfoundland accordion album in 1956 and was a pioneering musician in the Newfoundland radio and recording industry. When asked by folklorists Sheldon Posen and Michael Taft what sort of music he liked, the following was Doyle's response:

I like Irish music...My idols [were] a group that I had the privilege of playing with for a two-week tour of Newfoundland...the McNulty Family. This was one of the groups that inspired me, I like their type of music, and we still do a lot of their numbers (Posen and Taft 1973, MUNFLA 73-45, C1445).

Frank Maher, an accordionist from the Battery in St. John's, is still a big McNulty fan. Maher was 19 when the McNulty Family came to town and he saw all eight of the McNultys' shows (2010). He was also in the crowd on the harbour front when they arrived and on one occasion met Ann McNulty at the Harbour Inn (Maher pers. comm. 2010). Maher says the McNultys are still a big influence on his music today and he recorded "Rollicking Skipper B" on his solo album *Maherulous* exactly as they recorded

it in 1937 (Maher 2005; McGraw 2010e). This particular recording is different from how the tune has been treated by other players in Newfoundland as shown in the analysis below.

The musical repertoire and style of the McNulty Family, transmitted over airwaves, made quite an impact on Newfoundlanders. Ann McNulty was well-known for her accordion playing and may have influenced some of the many women accordionists in Newfoundland, many of whom do not perform on stage (Best 2006, 40; see Osborne 2008b, MUNFLA 2008-002). However, despite the extra back strength it takes to play accordion, and the higher class associations of the violin in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are far more women playing accordion than fiddle in Newfoundland. Perhaps the 19<sup>th</sup>-century marketing of the accordion to women carried over into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 2008, Ted McGraw presented a lecture at Boston College which detailed some of the influence the McNulty Family had on Newfoundland music. He outlined how their version of “Molly Bawn” is the most popular version on the island and also compared their version of the tune “The Rollicking Skipper” with those of two other players, Harry Hibbs and Frank Maher (McGraw 2008, 2010e). In McGraw’s record collection of fifty-five Newfoundland albums, he found thirty albums that had forty-nine of the McNulty tunes re-recorded by nineteen different artists (McGraw 2008, 2010d). I have extended this search using the Discography of Newfoundland database recently developed by the Centre of Newfoundland Studies in Memorial University of Newfoundland which has catalogued 2,577 titles (Centre for Newfoundland Studies 2009, np).

For this analysis I focused on the recordings available from the Big 6 the weekend before the McNultys opened their first show in St. John’s (*Evening Telegram* 1953f, 12).

[Please see Appendix Four.] There were 100 songs on 78-rpm-discs listed in the advertisement; all had been recorded with Decca, with the one, unsurprising, exception of “Pat Murphy’s Meadow.” Through a discography search I found that exactly fifty have been re-recorded over 298 times by over eighty-four different Newfoundland musicians. Out of the remainder of the McNulty repertoire only twelve were re-recorded. The total times these twelve songs were covered equalled 230 times, but this includes sixty different recordings of the “Star of Logy Bay” and sixty-one recordings of “Mussels in the Corner” recorded by the McNultys as “Maggie in the Woods” bringing the number down to 109. The lyrics to “Star of Logy Bay” can be considered to have originated in Newfoundland. In my analysis below, I argue that there is a strong likelihood that “Mussels in the Corner” was already in the oral tradition of the province and may not have been introduced by the McNulty recordings. Interestingly, the McNultys recorded the “Irish Rover” with Copley in the 1950s but Ann McNulty does not play on the track as it uses piano accordion and changes key several times.<sup>177</sup>

There has been a resurgence of McNulty covers recorded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with forty-two songs (198 times) being recorded in the past ten years compared to thirty-three (142 times) in the 1990s and twenty-four, thirty-one, and twenty-eight in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s respectively and fourteen in the 1950s when the recording industry was just getting on its feet locally. It is clear that the recordings available at the Big 6 made a large impact on the subsequent recording repertoire of Newfoundland musicians. As

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<sup>177</sup> “The Irish Rover” was recorded in Newfoundland twenty-one times since the 1960s with the majority of recordings (10) being in the 1990s. I think it could be attributed to the 1966 release of the Irish Rovers’ album *The First of the Irish Rovers*.



suggested by Karpeles in 1955, some songs pass into the local tradition from sources such as the radio and subsequently become folk songs (7).

Not all the songs popular in 1953 withstood the test of time. A song mentioned often in show reviews, “Shall My Soul Pass through Old Ireland,” was recorded only twice, once by Omar Blondahl in 1959 but not again until 1986 by musician, John R. Murphy, in a band called Whitehorse. Another song mentioned in the reviews, “A Mother’s Love is a Blessing,” was recorded at least eighteen times with a particular resurgence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Although it is significant that so much of the McNulty Family repertoire was re-recorded in Newfoundland, there may not be a direct link in each case. The McNultys often recorded traditional Irish or well-known Irish-American songs which could have been learned by Newfoundland musicians from other sources. However, it is my supposition that the McNulty Family repertoire became part of the Newfoundland soundscape and musical sense of place and that the songs available through the Big 6 were most likely to be adopted into local repertoires.

#### ***5.10.1 Musical Style Influences***

In listening to my limited resources for early to mid-20th-century Irish-American musicians and the McNulty Family, it strikes me that Ann McNulty’s accordion style is a bit different from that of her contemporaries. In many song arrangements of other Irish-American musical groups of the same time period, such as the Flannigan Brothers, the instrumental accompaniment provided harmonic or contrapuntal accompaniment and arrangements. In comparison, the McNultys played in unison with the melody which was

the case with many of the early influential Newfoundland recording artists such as Wilf Doyle. In my experience many Newfoundland fiddlers and accordion players also often play songs as instrumental pieces. Perhaps this is linked to Ann McNulty's habit of unison playing with the melody rather than arranging harmonies. Another similarity between Ann McNulty and the Newfoundland accordion tradition is the instrument itself. Ann McNulty played what is now referred to as "old" style Irish melodeon, playing on a single or double row diatonic German accordion, as opposed to the "new" style chromatic button Italian accordion now favoured in Ireland (see G. Smith 1997). This old style has been maintained as the primary accordion style in Newfoundland until recently. With the influence of the 1990s Celtic revival in which Irish instrumental recordings became more influential and available, the versatility of the Italian button accordion has become evident. Perhaps the rise in professional musical exchanges between Newfoundland and Irish musicians has also demonstrated the benefits of the Italian chromatic instrument. It is unclear why Newfoundlanders preferred this older style but it could have something to do with availability of only one type of accordion, or its price, which then developed into a local taste. The single or double row diatonic accordion can only play in one or two keys which is why Ann McNulty required multiple accordions in different keys for a show. As Irish chromatic accordionist James Keane, who played with Ryan's Fancy, explained the technique required for a diatonic is not extensive and means that a performer only need know *how* to play in one key as they can modulate simply by picking up a different accordion (2010).

The following is an analysis of the fourteen instrumental tunes I have access to with particular weight on "Fair Roscommon Polka," "Mussels in the Corner" and

“Rollicking Skipper.” The purpose of this analysis is to examine the potential influence of the McNulty repertoire on the instrumental musicians of Newfoundland. It has been established that the McNultys’ song repertoire became very prominent in the recording repertoire of the island. This section examines the recording history of the McNultys’ instrumental tunes and two tunes, “Rollicking Skipper” and “Mussels in the Corner” in detail, in order to illuminate the nuances of recording influences on a living instrumental tradition.

### ***5.11 Instrumental Tune Analysis***

The McNulty Family recorded only twelve sets of instrumental tunes during their career. Despite the low number, many of these became a part of the Newfoundland repertoire as Ann’s accordion playing was well appreciated on the Island. The McNultys recorded “Haste to the Wedding” and “The Half-Door” as songs, which in Newfoundland are performed as tunes. The earliest tune recorded by the McNultys was “The Rollicking Skipper” on May 27, 1937. This recording was followed by “Slipping the Jig” in August of the same year. More tunes were recorded in 1941 and 1942. With the advent of WWII, the group stopped recording until Dec. 30, 1947 when they recorded two more sets. In 1950, they recorded the “Stack of Wheat” also known as “Ann Carawath” and then a tune called “Fair Roscommon Polka” with Copley sometime after 1952. The latter is the only tune they may have recorded after their trip to Newfoundland (see section 5.11.1).

On the list of McNulty records from the Big 6 on April 24, 1953, there are four tunes listed which I have not found in the discography. These are “Miss McLoud’s [*sic*]

Reel/Philip O’Beirne’s Delight” and “Tell her I Am/Richard Brennan’s Favourite” (*Evening Telegram* 1953f, 12).<sup>178</sup> Of the total of sixteen tracks, representing twenty-six tunes, including “Haste to the Wedding” and “The Half Door” I am aware of at least seventeen Newfoundland variants. It is hard to say if all of these were learned directly from the McNulty records as they are such well-known tunes. According to McGraw the McNultys learned “Haste to the Wedding” word for word from a 1915 Irish school songster (Breathnach 1915, 294; McGraw 2010e, 461).

While “Haste to the Wedding” is a song on the McNulty recordings, it is commonly played as a tune in Newfoundland and Ireland and appears in many instrumental collections dating back to at least 1767 (Narváez 2006, 8). In Taft’s 1975 *Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador 1904-1972* there are ten instances of “Haste to the Wedding” recorded by Newfoundland performers, mainly fiddlers and accordionists.

The McNulty set, “Garryowen/ Three Little Drummers,” is an interesting case. The second tune is known in Newfoundland as “The Shimmey” with a slight variation in the high strain.<sup>179</sup> “Garryowen” is also a common tune, however, neither are often recorded. “Garryowen” has been noted in Kelly Russell’s tune books (1992, 11, 2003, 6). Recent Newfoundland recordings of “Garryowen” are actually of an Irish republican song called “Sean South of Garryowen” made popular by the Wolfetones rather than the

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<sup>178</sup> Ten of these tunes were in The Big 6 ad including those mentioned plus “Stack of Barley,” “Kierow,” “Rollicking Skipper,” “Half-door,” “Haste to the Wedding,” and “Slipping the Jig.” I do not have recordings of the “Miss McLoud’s” or “Tell Her I Am” sets.

<sup>179</sup> I learned this tune as a child from fiddler Christina Smith.

instrumental tune. The “Shimmy” has only been recorded twice but is known by many instrumentalists.

“Chasing the Chicken” and “Maid on the Green” are also tunes known in Newfoundland under other names; the first is clearly “Geese in the Bog” which has been recorded at least ten times and is very commonly played. “Maid on the Green” could be a variant of “Auntie Mary” also known as “Chasing Charlie” or “Cock of the North.” “Stack of Barley” is a common tune known as “Stack of Wheat.” “Kielrow” was noted in Kelly Russell’s second collection as part of Allan Hillier’s repertoire. Hillier of Griquet, GNP also knew “Rollicking Skipper B,” “Stack of Barley,” “Mussels in the Corner” and “Haste to the Wedding” (2003, 22-23). All of these tunes are common in the transnational instrumental repertoire, but it is possible that Hillier learned them from McNulty Family recordings or radio.

#### ***5.11.1 Fair Roscommon Polka and Paddy’s Jig***

The “Fair Roscommon Polka” is the only instrumental tune which could have been recorded after their tour in Newfoundland. [Please see Notation One below.] It is a variant of the single jig or polka known locally in Newfoundland as “Paddy’s Jig.” It is not an exact copy but it is conceivable Ann may have learned this from Wilf Doyle or another musician. However, it is also possible that it passed into Newfoundland playing from their recordings later, or the two were independent of each other. I present here two versions, the McNulty version from the 1950s and the Snotty Var version from 1997 (McNulty Family 2001a; Snotty Var 1997). Snotty Var was a collection of musicians in St. John’s who attend sessions and were active in the traditional music scene in the late

1990s.<sup>180</sup> This version is representative of what is played in St. John's in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

McNulty Family  
Fair Roscommon Polka  
mid-1950s

Snotty Var  
Paddy's Jig  
1997

The image displays musical notation for two versions of a piece, Fair Roscommon Polka/Paddy's Jig. The notation is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in 2/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system shows measures 6-10, and the third system shows measures 11-15. Each system has two staves: the top staff is for McNulty Family (mid-1950s) and the bottom staff is for Snotty Var (1997). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, with some measures containing repeat signs. The McNulty version is characterized by more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth-note runs, while the Snotty Var version is simpler and more direct.

#### Notation One: Fair Roscommon Polka/ Paddy's Jig

The high part, or second strain, has almost identical intervallic outlines. The primary difference between the two variants is the penultimate measure's approach to the cadence. In the first turn, they are also quite close except for sixteenth-note-runs in bars 2 and 6 in the McNulty score. The McNultys play this piece at approximately 125 beats per minute (bpm) while Snotty Var plays it considerably faster at about 160bpm.

<sup>180</sup> John Bishop (tin whistle, low D whistle, flute), Michelle Brophy (flute), Rob Brown (guitar), Allan Carrol (bouzouki, mandolin), Jim Fidler (Egyptian Def drum, chicken shakes), Mike Hanrahan (tenor banjo, bouzouki, mandolin), Frank Maher (accordion), Pat Moran (fiddle), Francesca Swann (cello), Brian Titus (tin whistle), and Rick West (bodhran).

### ***5.11.2 Rollicking Skipper B***

“Rollicking Skipper ‘B’” was recorded by Wilf Doyle on his first album as a dance tune. The tune, however, was misnamed as “Slipping the Jig” (W. Doyle 1956). [Please see Notation Two below.] The following section examines, “Rollicking Skipper B,” as recorded by the McNulty Family in 1937 and included in the Big 6’s list of available McNulty recordings in 1953. It has been since re-recorded in Newfoundland at least twenty-nine times by as many different artists and is a common tune played by fiddlers. I focus here on four of these versions: the McNulty Family (2001a), Wilf Doyle (1956), Newfoundland rock band Rawlins Cross *Celtic Instrumentals* (1997) and folk band Shanneyganock (2004). The McNulty recording includes two different tunes with an unusual set structure proceeding from “Rollicking Skipper” to the other tune and back to “Rollicking Skipper.” I do not know the name for the other tune. This structure was not upheld in Newfoundland recordings with the exception of Frank Maher’s 2005 version (2005). Maher’s adherence is not as unexpected as one might think with a difference of sixty-eight years in recording dates. As previously stated, Maher is a McNulty fan who attended the 1953 concerts and learned directly from the original recordings. As Maher’s version is an exact note for note replica of the McNulty recording I have not reproduced a transcript of it here (ibid.).

McNulty Family 1936	
Wilf Doyle 1956	
Rawlins Cross 1997	
Shanneiganock 2004	

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### Notation Two: Rollicking Skipper B

There is a surprising amount of consistency across decades with “Rollicking Skipper.” The primary deviations are played by Rawlins Cross. There are significant differences in tempo between versions (McNultys 140bpm; Rawlins Cross and Shanneyganock 160bpm; Wilf Doyle 180bpm). Doyle’s version differs in terms of form due to its dance accompaniment connection. He plays the tune thirteen times ending with a single A turn. Each of the other groups, including the McNultys, have paired it with another tune and play Rollicking three times before proceeding to another tune.<sup>181</sup> The McNultys are the only ones to recap back to “Rollicking Skipper” before the end.

The ensemble arrangements vary between the groups. The McNultys use accordion, fiddle, piano and on the very last turn they add the sound of Eileen’s tap dancing. Eileen’s step dancing is used as a percussion technique in the McNulty recordings, but sparingly. Eileen only steps out every few turns of the tune amounting to a total of sixteen to thirty-two bars. Doyle has recreated this element in many of his tunes demonstrating his admiration of the McNultys. Doyle substitutes a wood block or similar

<sup>181</sup> Rawlins Cross pairs “Rollicking” with “The Shimmy” and Shanneyganock combines it with “Pussey Cat Got Up in the Plum Tree” as recorded by Wilf Doyle on *More Dance Favourites* (1960, 1962).

sound for tap shoes metallic click and uses it more frequently than the McNultys did themselves. This unique rhythmic element has not survived past Doyle's time period. Both of the later groups, Rawlins Cross and Shanneyganock, use a band, including bass, guitar and drum set along with accordion. Rawlins Cross also adds a bodhran introduction and layers a tin whistle, instead of a step dance sound, on the last turn of "Rollicking."

Tunes tend to change slightly over time through variations introduced by individual musicians. Sometimes this happens when a tune is remembered or learned inaccurately, when variations are deliberately introduced to provide a personal mark, or to reduce repetitive monotony. The versions of "Rollicking" presented here are surprisingly consistent through the decades. The McNulty and Doyle versions are almost identical except for a few extra passing notes in bars 6, 10 and 12. Considering the small amount of variation, coupled with Doyle's respect for the McNultys, it is almost certain that he learnt this version from their 78. Forty-eight years later Shanneyganock recorded a version of "Rollicking Skipper" that mirrors Doyle's version in the use of quarter note in bars 5 and 10 rather than step wise passing notes. There is slightly more variation in this version but not much, with only a change of interval in bar 2 and a slight variation in the high strain when accordion player Mark Hiscock drops down to an A on the middle repetition of BDD. The majority of note variations occur in the 1997 Rawlins Cross version of "Rollicking Skipper." Rawlins Cross is known as a band willing to experiment with music and blends of Irish, Scottish, Newfoundland music and American-Canadian rock-pop. Thus Rawlins Cross' decision to introduce variations into such a long standing stable tune is not surprising; however they keep the identifiable motifs of

the tune intact and primarily play with passing notes in bar 3. The high strain is kept consistent with other versions.

The general feel differs between the McNulty and Newfoundland versions. The McNulty “Rollicking” has more of a swing to it with heavy and weak beats with a particular lean on the downbeat of the phrases which would make me, as a dancer, want to stomp my foot harder on those first beats. The Wilf Doyle version is consistent with the aesthetic I found in my research with Newfoundland dance fiddlers. In Newfoundland dance music there are often no heavy and weak beats within a measure. Each beat is equal to the others so it gives less of a swing and more of a steady pace. At Doyle’s tempo one might say a steady sprint! Even though Shanneyganock and Rawlins Cross’ versions are slower than Doyle’s they have retained this straight-ahead feel to the music. This is an example of adaption to local aesthetics, slight but noticeable.

### ***5.11.3 Maggie in the Woods as Mussels in the Corner***

The “I’ve got a Bonnet Trimmed with Blue” and “Maggie in the Woods” set is another interesting case. [Please see Notation Three below.] “Bonnet” is certainly a common tune played around the island and has been re-recorded at least three times with perhaps, the most memorable being a chin music version by Nellie Musseau (Peacock 1965, 60).<sup>182</sup> “Maggie in the Woods” is a version of the extremely common polka known in Newfoundland as “Mussels in the Corner” which has been recorded in Newfoundland at least sixty-one times. “Mussels in the Corner” has become exceedingly popular in the

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<sup>182</sup> Musseau was recorded by Kenneth Peacock in June 1960 in Mouse Island, Port aux Basques. Her songs are part of the Peacock collection housed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. “I’ve Got a Bonnet Trimmed in Blue” is number PEA167 No.1056.

past few decades and was the tune used for the previously mentioned “Accordion Revolution.” The significant changes the tune has undergone suggests that, either it was part of the local tradition to begin with, or it was naturalized quickly into the repertoire and subjected to local variation. I present four different variants of “Mussels in the Corner,” all transcribed in D (Combden 2007; Creagh and Desplanques 2003; W. Doyle 1956).<sup>183</sup> Doyle’s variant is the fastest at ca.170bpm. As a dance musician, his version is also the longest with six repetitions of the tune ending on the high section. The McNultys are the slowest at ca.140bpm, next is Combden at 145bpm and then the *Island to Island* recording at 150bpm. The McNultys and *Island to Island* both play the tune three times through with repeats of both strains and both versions start on the low turn first. Doyle is the only one who starts on the high turn, in the same manner that I learned the tune from Christina Smith. However, Doyle’s form is AA B rather than AA BB. Combden, an accordion player from Fogo Island, is the least consistent in the repetition of form and is the only player to include a third strain. His performance was also the least formal as I recorded it myself in a fieldwork interview setting. When I asked about his form he explained that:

I got no set pattern. I might play one part twice and then the other part once and then play the first part twice, once, and the other part twice; but if you’re playing with someone you sort of want to know, because...I might be going for one part and you’ll be going for the other part. (2007)

This is an important point made by Combden and one I’ve experience with other solo dance players in Newfoundland. The other recordings are all played in ensemble,

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<sup>183</sup> Wilf Doyle’s recording is from his 1956 album and was originally performed in G major as was Melville Combden’s 2007 performance, while the McNulty’s recorded it in B originally. Only the 2003 *Island to Island* recording was in D (Creagh and Desplanques).

and logistically a set pattern must be followed for performance or recording. A solo dance musician needs only to keep a beat for the dancer's feet rather than adhere to a fixed pattern of melodic repetition.

The instrumentation is quite varied. The McNultys use accordion, fiddle, and piano. Tap dancing enters on the second repeat of the tune. Doyle has a full band with accordion, bass, wood block and snare. The *Island to Island* set uses only fiddle and accordion with guitar accompaniment. Combden's version is solo accordion.

There are far more variations and differences between versions of "Mussels in the Corner" than found in "Rollicking Skipper." The 2/4 polka form, known as single jig in Newfoundland, allows for more experimentation without disturbing the identifying motifs. The low strain has two possible introductions. The first, played by the McNultys and *Island to Island* drops down and back up a perfect fourth, D-A-D-E while the second popularized by Wilf Doyle, uses only F#, E and D. I have heard various combinations of this including F#-F#-E-D being the most common followed by Combden's F#-D-D-E and Doyle's slightly embellished F#-G-F#-E-D.

McNulty Family  
1941

Wilf Doyle  
1956

Island to Island  
2003

Melvin Combden  
Fogo Island, 2007

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### Notation Three: Mussels in the Corner/ Maggie in the Woods

The high strain is the most consistent with all four variants playing the same notes in bar 9/13 with only the McNultys adding a dotted rhythm. Bar 10/14 shows that if Newfoundland musicians did learn this from the McNultys then they have developed their own stable variation. The final two bars also show local standardization amongst the non-McNulty versions.

The low strain contains the most variation. Beyond the opening bar and bar 7, Doyle's version is similar to the McNulty's and Combden's follows Doyle. However Doyle simplifies bar 4 to two quarter notes while Combden follows the McNulty version. The *Island to Island* version using patterns that almost sound like accompaniment or improvisation on the motifs. This is not surprising as both Wells and Carrigan are willing to experiment with tunes to provide new and interesting variations within the tradition. In my opinion they are part of a group of musicians who are at the forefront of completing the transition of Newfoundland music from functional, participatory, dance music to presentational-high fidelity music in the manner theorized by Thomas Turino. According to Turino, there is little arranged accompaniment in participatory music but accompanying figures and harmonies become more prevalent as the music is arranged for listeners rather than dancers or other participators (2008, 54-56).

Combden explained that the third strain is new and has only been introduced in the past few years but he liked it and "latched on to it" (Combden 2007). [Please see Notation Four below.] I first learned this third turn from Colin Carrigan in 2001 and have heard it many times since. In a passing conversation with an English musician in 2010 they admitted that they have started pairing "Donkey Riding" and "Maggie in the Woods" in the previous ten years at their home sessions. This strain does sound similar to "Donkey Riding" at points. It is an interesting timeline comparison for the introduction of the strain in St. John's, Fogo Island and the United Kingdom.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> I have no theories as to why musicians both in Newfoundland and the UK might have started adding this third strain around the same time period other than a potential influential recording of which I am unaware. One possible source could be Great Big Sea's 2000 recording *Road Rage* which made the song "Donkey Riding" quite popular in Canada and perhaps the UK.



Notation Four: Melvin Combden's C-section of the Fogo Island "Mussels in the Corner" Variant

### **5.12 Conclusions**

Why was the McNulty Family so popular in Newfoundland? Pat Byrne theorized that after a crisis of national and political identities through Commission of Government and then Confederation, the lyrics of the McNulty songs of exile and longing for a homeland that no longer exists, resonated with Newfoundlanders' experiences (1991, 66-67). I have not done a lyrical analysis because my focus is instrumental musicians, however, I must agree with Byrne's hypothesis that the lyrics connected with the political and cultural situations of the times. As time went on, I think it started to resonate on a different personal level, a level which interacts with inter-generational family memories and senses of place. Since the McNultys were a major presence on early Newfoundland radio they became a part of a shared musical soundscape everyone knew and heard throughout the island. Webb argues that the "character" of Newfoundland radio shows were slightly different from its Canadian and American counterparts. He states that through the *Barrelman* program, were used to, and "valued programming that reflected the Newfoundland people to themselves" (Webb 2008b, 71, 81). Webb also argues, as do I, that early Newfoundland radio helped to create an "imagined community" of listeners (ibid., 14). The McNulty Family music was broadcast by a local business man and many believed them to be from Newfoundland. Their tour and their recording of



Newfoundland songs solidified the feeling that the McNultys were a part of the Newfoundland “imagined” musical community and musical sense of place. At the time, radio listening was limited both by programming and battery power (ibid., 28). With limited radio stations to choose from, one show could command almost an entire listening audience. The McNultys’ popularity helped to create a sense of radio and recorded music tradition and history in personal and collective memory. It was also a music heard throughout the island at a time when local song and instrumental repertoires varied widely across the still segmented island. As Webb points out, the songs played over the repertoire had the power to change the repertoire of local singers (ibid., 71). However, my analysis supports Halpert’s assertion that “modern commercial music” is adopted “selectively” as only portions of their repertoire were re-recorded rather than all of it (1975, v). During this time period the radio was not left on as background company, but listened to as an event in a week. It often brought friends and family together to share in the experience of the news and/or music. Music can be a powerful memory bringing one back to time spent with older relatives who have passed on and live only in memory. These memories of family are linked to place and occasioned by the radio media. The nature of radio listening, as suggested by Lovelace, was more “intimate” in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as it occasioned and felt akin to a “real social interaction” (1986, 19). Combined with social gathering to listen to the radio, it was similar to Ben-Amos’ idea of “small group” interactions while listening to music which people felt to be part of their musical sense of place. Monty Barfoot associates the *Big 6* Show and McNulty Family music with spending time with his late father at his uncle’s house:

I always liked [the McNulty Family], ever since I was knee high to a grasshopper,

when my dad was living we'd have the *Big 6* show on, on Thursday nights and no one could make a sound. He really loved them. We used to go into my uncle's [house] on Mount Cashel road and they had a big stack [of McNulty 78s] on the coffee table...and the old gramophone....They were always playing them there, I always liked them. My dad was going to take us [to the concerts]...but...we never ever did get there. I would have been seven or eight [years old]. He certainly did love the McNultys, he loved them...they just sang lovely songs, they sang songs about everything. (2010)

While certainly the McNultys had a great influence on Newfoundland musicians, Newfoundland also left a mark on the McNulty Family. The most obvious was the two songs they recorded of Newfoundland origin "When I Mowed Pat Murphy's Meadow" and the "Star of Logy Bay." They recorded the "Star of Logy Bay" with Copley after their tour to Newfoundland and Eileen said she always found it amusing when someone would return from Ireland and remark that they could not find Logy Bay (1975).

Tracing tunes is harder than tracing songs due to a lack of lyrics. However, it seems reasonably clear that the McNultys had an influence on Newfoundland instrumental music as well as the song repertoire. Certainly Ma's accordion helped confirm the accordion as a popular instrument and the unison melodic style accompaniment is unusual. The continuing preference for button accordion in Newfoundland might possibly be traced to the McNultys. Ireland began using chromatic accordions in the 1960s, with the advent of the "modern style," yet the diatonic button accordion remains king in Newfoundland. Only in the past ten years have players started to learn the chromatic accordion.<sup>185</sup> Wilf Doyle was highly influenced by the McNultys which in turn influenced his recording repertoire. As the first Newfoundland accordion

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<sup>185</sup> Two row accordions may be chromatic or diatonic depending on the keys of the separate rows. If the rows are a 4<sup>th</sup> apart (A/D or G/C) then it is a diatonic accordion. If the two rows are a semitone apart (B/C or C#/D) it is a chromatic accordion.

recording artist his tastes had a significant effect and he presented a blend of local music with a taste of McNulty stylings. Doyle presented Newfoundland dance music to future generations and through him the McNulty instrumental tunes live on. The cases of the “Rollicking Skipper” and “Mussels in the Corner/Maggie in the Woods” are illuminating in terms of how a tradition absorbs and preserves new material. The “Rollicking Skipper” was quite clearly from the McNultys’ however “Mussels in the Corner” is questionable. Was it already in the tradition? Was it learned from the McNultys and then adopted and adapted? It is difficult to say. One thing is clear, the McNultys had an influence, but they did not dictate repertoire and style to undiscerning sponge-like musicians. The McNultys simply helped to inform and round out the repertoire of Newfoundland musicians who picked and chose pieces, sometimes reproducing a tune exactly and sometimes adapting.

The McNultys had a profound influence both in Newfoundland and in New York. It is telling, however, that two out of the three scholars who have examined their career, focused on their impact in Newfoundland (P. Byrne 1991; McGraw 2010e; Moloney 1982). This chapter has clearly shown in detail the importance of the McNultys to the repertoire of Newfoundland musicians and also how the McNulty Family presented themselves in relation to Ireland and New York, two important cultural connections for Newfoundlanders both historically and at the time the McNultys were performing. The following statement brilliantly sums up the juggling act of ideas of place which the McNulty Family managed to pull off. As one reviewer for the *Daily News* explained:

They turned away crowds at the Pitts Memorial Hall last night as a touch of County Roscommon, by way of Broadway, in the form of the marvellous McNultys took the town by storm with a repertoire of lilting, heart-tugging songs

of Erin. (1953b)

The glamorous gowns of New York worked for the McNulty Family in their immediate marketing efforts for concerts and tours; however, it was the music which stayed with Newfoundlanders over generations. The McNulty Family is now remembered by those who listened to them on the radio with their families, and for whom their music represents an era past. For other musicians, many of their songs and tunes have passed into the common repertoire of the Newfoundland recording industry. As Shanneyganock explained at their concert in St. John's (2012), they knew these songs from Newfoundland artists such as John White, rather than from the McNulty Family themselves. The McNulty Family may not have been Newfoundlanders but they have become a part of our musical sense of place and contributed to the expectations of standard Newfoundland recording repertoire.

**Chapter Six:**  
***Folklore Television:***  
***The Ryan's Fancy Show Promoting Local Newfoundland Culture***

***6.1 Introduction***

The late 1960s and early 1970s found Newfoundlanders discontented with the largely failed industrial aspirations of Joey Smallwood's government. The St. John's arts and university communities started exploring a nostalgic, and anti-modernist, view of the "real" Newfoundland, symbolized by traditional life in the outports. The 1970s era was a time for artists to "rediscover" Newfoundland and be proud of their rural heritage. Literary figures such as Ted Russell and Ray Guy promoted the rural outport as the symbol of the real Newfoundland. Newfoundland musical groups, Red Island and Figgy Duff put a new rock-and-roll inspired spin on local traditional music.<sup>186</sup> Figgy Duff and Ryan's Fancy in particular did local collecting to expand their repertoires of Newfoundland music. Theatre companies such as the Mummers Troupe revitalized vernacular theatre while the comedy troupe Codco made fun of the classic Newfoundland stereotypes and questioned how Newfoundlanders presented themselves. There was a difference of opinion between those who thought of Newfoundlanders as Irish and those who sought to legitimize and promote Newfoundland culture and history as something unique and different. In many ways, Ryan's Fancy struck a balancing act between the two identities and contributed to the construction of both a Newfoundland and Irish-

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<sup>186</sup> Figgy Duff was particularly inspired by the English revival and Fairport Convention. For more information on Figgy Duff please see Saugeres (1991).

centred musical sense of place. I examine how they used their appeal as a popular Irish group to promote and preserve outport culture especially through their television program. Their show *Ryan's Fancy* promoted Newfoundland rural outport culture by combining folklore fieldwork and documentary style television. I begin with the story of how Ryan's Fancy evolved and came to live in Newfoundland. The remainder of the chapter looks at the influence of their music and ends with an analysis of one of their fieldwork-based television shows. The musicians discussed in this chapter are the founding members Denis Ryan, Dermot O'Reilly and Fergus O'Byrne. I also interviewed James Keane who played with the group from 1979 to 1982.

## ***6.2 Irish Revival Scenes of the 1960s-Dublin, Toronto and New York***

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Newfoundland was part of a larger shift in worldview. Throughout Western Europe and North America a number of the folk revival movements encouraged people to seek roots and question modernity. Groups such as Fairport Convention, the Dubliners, the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, were changing the way traditional folk musics were approached and arranged for the stage. In the 1960s, three major urban revival scenes came together to help form the group Ryan's Fancy. Each of the members spent time in the Dublin revival scene before coming to Toronto which was experiencing its own revival, no doubt highly influenced by New York City. The following sections outline how these revivals intersected with the members of Ryan's Fancy.

### ***6.2.1 Dublin's Irish Scene***

All of the musicians discussed in this chapter spent time in Dublin during the 1960s revival. This decade spawned the “ballad boom” and rise of ceili groups. Groups such as the Dubliners, The Corries from Scotland, and Mick Moloney as part of the Johnstons were current. There were also the wider American folk revival influences of Joan Baez and Tom Paxton. All of this came together to create a scene which Denis Ryan described as “electrifying” (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-951).<sup>187</sup> Both Denis Ryan and Dermot O'Reilly played regularly in Dublin during the 1960s. Surprisingly they did not meet until they arrived in Canada. As Ryan explains he played at the Parnell House, with the Tara Folk Group on two nights a week while Dermot O'Reilly played two other nights with The Parnells (ibid.).<sup>188</sup>

James Keane, now an internationally known accordion player, gave me a detailed account of his experience of the Dublin revival.<sup>189</sup> Keane explained that in the 1950s due to the effects of both the Dance Hall Act of 1935 and the historical presence of the British army in urban centres there was next to no Irish music played in public or on the radio (2010). O'hAllmhuráin described the Dance Hall Act as a “draconian act to control public morality [and]... many musicians were silenced” (1998, 131-132). The dances moved to “supervised” parish hall settings with a fee at the door where dancing could be monitored for inappropriate behaviour (ibid.). Keane declared that:

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<sup>187</sup> For more information on the Dublin folk revival see (see Ó'hAllmhuráin 1998, 153-154).

<sup>188</sup> I will mention important venues which were the hubs of certain scenes in my narrative. While it may seem to be unnecessary detail, a single venue can play an important role in the development of a musical scene by supporting musicians and giving them a place to perform and audiences to listen. I am also considering a non-scholarly and local audience who may read this dissertation and have memories of certain venues, particularly those in Newfoundland. A list of venues mentioned is in Appendix Three.

<sup>189</sup> Both his parents were good fiddle players from County Clare and County Longford and his house was a common spot for musicians traveling through Dublin to stop for food and music (Keane 2010).

Music in the early days in Dublin was swept under the mat. It was only played behind closed doors, it wasn't welcomed in bars...you would never have a concert, there would be no such thing. You couldn't get enough people to fill the front row in a concert in Dublin in those days. (2010)

He figures that his Dublin neighbours would not have known enough about Irish music to identify the strains floating out the windows of his home (ibid.). Keane connects this lack of awareness to a political tactic during the "British occupation" of Ireland. His point of view is that "If you're going to kill a country altogether, the best way to do it is to hit them in the culture pocket... you'll take them to their knees" (ibid.).

According to Keane, this lack of connection to Irish music was particularly true in the "garrison towns" such as Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Sligo but it was primarily an urban attitude and changed quickly a few miles out of town (ibid.). During the 1960s folk revival, Irish traditional music expanded into the urban centres. The previous rural context of Irish music likely affected the perception of Irish musicians who came to Newfoundland in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At that time they found that traditional music was still played in the outports and in houses. As discussed below, this created a strong musical sense of place association with the pre-revival era of Ireland and perhaps added to their perception of Newfoundland music as more traditional similar to the IFMC's 1954 definition.

Keane does not remember Irish music being well represented on the national radio service in the 1950s. According to him there was only a fifteen-minute time slot on Tuesday evenings, half an hour on Saturday nights (ibid.). James and his brother Sean, who became the fiddle player for the Chieftains, were often bullied and beaten up at school for playing Irish music instead of emulating American rock and roll and American



stars such as Elvis Presley (ibid.). This attitude may be similar to the Northern Ireland associations between Irish instrumental music, Roman Catholicism and rural, under-privileged people (M. Stokes 1994, 9).

Support for traditional culture grew throughout the 1950s and 60s with the creation of *Ceoltas Ceoltari Eirean*, a government sponsored institution to support Irish culture and language. Ó'hAllmhuráin noted that the 1956 *Fleadh*<sup>190</sup> in the town of Ennis was a turning point. That year the *Fleadh* truly became a national public event with “parades, pageants, street sessions and music competitions” including “legendary performers – Willie Clancy” and others (1998, 45-46). He also outlines the contemporary Irish collection projects funded by the BBC and Radio Éireann, some of which were directly destined for the airwaves. These included those headed by Séamus Ennis in the 1940s and 1950s. Ó'hAllmhuráin describes Ennis' collection as an “unprecedented achievement in the documentation of Irish traditional music” and provided the basis for the popular BBC radio program *As I Roved Out* (ibid., 139-140). Although there were some government institutionalized musical initiatives it was quite some time before Irish musicians were able to gain widespread respect.

In the 1960s, attitudes changed and it became possible to earn a living as an Irish musician in Dublin. Ó'hAllmhuráin suggests that this revival corresponded with better economic conditions. He states that the change from “public houses” to “lounge bars” in the new economy which admitted women and paid newly professionalized musicians as

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<sup>190</sup> As explained in Chapter Four, section 4.5.3, the *Fleadh* is the All-Ireland competitions for music and dance. Competitors come from local competitions at CCE branches all over the world to compete.

part of the atmosphere were a big part of hastening the revival of the 1960s (ibid., 150-151).

By the time that Keane left Dublin to immigrate to New York in 1967, the Dublin scene was strong. He was called on to play many venues per night:

There were nights I'd played five gigs in Dublin...One night Jerry O'Grady... [of] the *Evening Press*, in Dublin...wrote...that I was listed in thirteen different places in Dublin...and that's true as God...I had a bodhran player backing me...I would open in The Embankment for the Johnsons, go open for the Dubliners in the Old Sheeling, go back to this bar on the way and stop there. Go to Liberty Hall for...a late night concert after the bars and then to two or three different folk clubs that were open until two or three in the morning anyway. So with all that went on in those days, man, I was whizzin' all over the place. (2010)

While it seems possible there is a small amount of exaggeration, the point is made that the Dublin scene was lively and profitable for hard-working musicians such as Keane.

### **6.2.2 The New York Irish Scene**

In the late 1960s there was also an incredibly vibrant Irish scene in New York City. During the Sixties, the New York based Irish group The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem were at their peak of popularity and made a huge impact on the Irish music world both in the United States and in Ireland (Guida 2009, np). The Clancy Brothers from Tipperary went to New York in the late 1950s and became a part of the burgeoning Greenwich Village music scene. They were amongst many musicians who would form the basis of the 1960s United States folk revival in several genres. These musicians also included Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan amongst others

(Ó'hAllmhuráin 1998, 151-152).<sup>191</sup> All of these performers, together and separately, helped to reshape the aesthetics and expectations of folk and traditional musics in the western world. This change helped to bring western folk musics fully onto the stage, into a presentational and then high fidelity tradition. It was in New York City that the Clancy Brothers met Tommy Makem to form the Irish singing group that became internationally known after a 1961 Ed Sullivan Show appearance (ibid.).

James Keane also moved to New York in the 1960s. He was recruited by a man named Bill Fuller who owned Irish ballrooms in major cities such as New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles (2010). The first time Keane went to New York he found a vibrant scene in which thousands of young Irish people were going to dances. Keane was impressed by the size of the New York dance halls. He stated that the City Centre Ballroom was big enough to “land a 747” (ibid.). Fuller brought over top-notch Irish musicians from Ireland to play Irish dance music for an hour and a half between show bands (ibid.). Keane returned to Ireland vowing to move to New York at the first invitation which came a few months later (ibid.). This was a time when the famous Rockaway Beach area was still full of Irish music venues and bands such as Sullivan’s Gypsies were touring there (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). In Rockaway’s heyday the area was known as rough-and-tumble with run-down venues. It had been the Irish-New Yorkers retreat to escape the city when the McNulty Family played there several decades earlier in the 1940s and 1950s. Rockaway Beach was part of a

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<sup>191</sup> There are many great scholarly resources on the revival movements of the 1960s and 1970s (see R. Cohen 2002; Munro 1984; Rosenberg 1993b).

developing network of Irish music venues throughout North America, Western Europe, Australia and other parts of the world.<sup>192</sup>

### 6.2.3 *The Toronto Irish Scene*

When Denis Ryan and the other members of Ryan's Fancy immigrated to Toronto there were quite a few Irish bands, including the Irish Rovers, playing in the area.<sup>193</sup> The Windsor House on Church Street at Richmond was a focal point of Irish music in Toronto and helped the bands which contributed to the development of Ryan's Fancy. The Windsor House did not start as an Irish bar but it became one through the patrons who congregated there making it a focal point of the Irish community. As the owner, Jimmy McVeigh stated, "It became a home away from home for a lot of the Irish, especially the Irish lads who were working on construction digging-out the Toronto subway at the time" (Butler 2006, np).<sup>194</sup> By the early 1970s the Windsor House had two stages and was the place to go in Toronto to hear good Irish music (ibid.). Groups such as Sullivan's Gypsies, Sons of Erin, and the Dubliners all played this venue (ibid.). Today the Windsor House still features Irish music and shows Irish hurling games (McVeigh n.d., np).

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<sup>192</sup> Wherever I have travelled in the world, I have almost always come across an Irish bar of some sort including large cities such as Singapore, Beijing and smaller centres like Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia or Cuzco, Peru. The latter claims to be the highest Irish bar in the world.

<sup>193</sup> The Irish Rovers hosted a national television on CBC show out of Vancouver for six years during the 1970s, had the hit song "The Unicorn" (1967) and another two television series in the 1980s; in 1981 a 7-part series called *The Rovers Comedy House* aired and from 1984-1986 they starred in *Party With the Rovers* (Irish Rovers 2010, np; Kellum 2010; O'Byrne 2010; see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). *The Irish Rovers Show* aired for six seasons from the early 1970s. For more information on the group's history please see their website (Irish Rovers 2010, np).

<sup>194</sup> McVeigh emigrated to Toronto in 1956 (Butler 2006, np). After working other jobs he rented the Windsor House bar in 1961 and bought it in 1965 (Ibid.).

### ***6.3 Ryan's Fancy and the Travelling Irish – Early Group History***

In the late 1960s there was a movement of Irish musicians to Canada and subsequently to Newfoundland either to tour and/or play live. This migration was described by one St. John's journalist as an "Irish invasion" of "ebullient troubadours – in groups of two to four" (D. Morris 1969, 3). During the late 1960s and early 1970s there were several Irish groups travelling to Newfoundland from mainland North America on a semi-regular basis, these included Makem and Clancy, Sullivan's Gypsies, Sons of Erin and Ryan's Fancy. Eventually Ralph O'Brien, founder of The Sons of Erin, and Fergus O'Byrne, Denis Ryan and Dermot O'Reilly, all settled and worked as musicians in the province of Newfoundland. While musical groups visited the province in the 1950s, there was a marked increase after the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway (TCH) in 1966 which made it possible to drive rather than take the train. However, the roads in many places were still in rough shape. In 1971, country star Doc Williams had to call to be picked up in order to make it to his concert in Twillingate as his bus got stuck on the road (Williams and Smik 2006, 57-58).

Between 1967 and 1969, Denis Ryan, Fergus O'Byrne and Dermot O'Reilly, the future founding members of Ryan's Fancy, emigrated independently from Ireland to Toronto seeking better jobs and soon found themselves playing music in the burgeoning Irish scene. The history of this group also sheds light on the Irish scene in Toronto in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Unlike James Keane, none of the founding members of Ryan's Fancy moved to North America with the intention to become musicians. Each of them were pulled into

the scene as they had some musical skill, were Irish, and were offered opportunities to make extra money as musicians. As Fergus O'Byrne explained:

...in those times, both in Ireland and when I came to Canada, the type of parties and house gatherings I was at, most people seemed to play or if they didn't play they were... listening... to people singing and playing folk songs. There was a big, big folk thing going on. So, we tended to play a lot, but with no intentions of doing anything more than just playing and singing in houses. (2010)

In the following section I outline the groups in which Ryan, O'Reilly and O'Byrne gained experience before forming Ryan's Fancy.

### ***6.3.1 Dublin Ramblers and the Sons of Erin***

In 1967, Ralph O'Brien emigrated from Dublin to Hamilton, Ontario and in the mid-1970s he moved to Newfoundland, eventually opening Erin's Pub on Water Street in 1986 (2008). In the late 1960s O'Brien heard the Carlton Showband,<sup>195</sup> on the radio and:

...hated what they were doing, how they interpreted Irish music...everything was up flying and the tempo was off the rails all together. There was no such thing as ballads. It was bang it out...so when I listened to it I said "b'ye, I know we could do better than that." So I formed a group. (ibid.)

In response to this he formed his own group called The Sons of Erin. Unlike Ryan's Fancy, which had a very stable roster, Sons of Erin has changed musicians on a regular basis since its inception in Toronto. Ralph O'Brien and The Sons of Erin were instrumental in bringing together the members of Ryan's Fancy as they all played in The Sons of Erin at different points. Fergus O'Byrne explained that he was first asked to play

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<sup>195</sup> The Carlton Showband was an Irish-Canadian band that performed together from 1964-1996 and starred in *The Pig and Whistle Show* on CTV (Carleton Showband 2007, np). They were very popular in Newfoundland and played sold-out shows at the largest theatre in the province, The Arts and Culture Centre.

Irish music at the Windsor House on Churchill and Richmond Streets in Toronto, with a guitarist named Mick Crowley, also known as Tony Banjo, Gary Kavanagh of Dublin and Ralph O'Brien (2010). From this group of transient musicians, the Dublin Ramblers were formed. This group eventually became known as The Sons of Erin (D. O'Reilly 2004).<sup>196</sup> When O'Brien heard that Dermot O'Reilly was in Hamilton he invited him to join the group. O'Reilly explained that he met the other members of the group a few minutes before their first performance together. He stepped on stage after a short repertoire discussion and no rehearsal (ibid.). He was able to play with other musicians so readily due to a common Irish repertoire of songs and tunes.

The Sons of Erin had their first gigs at the Windsor House for which they got paid with five draft beer (R. O'Brien 2008).<sup>197</sup> They continued playing at the Windsor House<sup>198</sup> and they started developing a regular audience:

All this time at this pub it was developing into more of a listening session....We weren't players; we were singers and flailing away at guitars, not very well, but then it got to the point that there was such a crowd coming down to this pub that the owner decided [to] move it upstairs...he decided to put in a couple of microphones and speakers and charge money at the door and [that] gave us money and it developed into a weekly sort of gig. (O'Byrne 2010)

The Sons of Erin were the first of the Irish bands to tour Newfoundland, since Makem and Clancy had toured the island in the late 1960s. The Sons of Erin came to Newfoundland first in 1969 and toured for six weeks in St. John's, Gander, Grand Falls and Labrador (R. O'Brien 2008; see Rosenberg 1981, MUNFLA 81-267). On their first

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<sup>196</sup> The original group included Ralph O'Brien, Fergus O'Byrne, Gary Kavanagh, Mick Crowley and Ben Brooks, all from Ireland or England (see Rosenberg 1981, MUNFLA 81-267).

<sup>197</sup> Ralph O'Brien claimed that five beer cost the bar about fifty cents. As they got more popular their pay was increased to \$5 and three beers (R. O'Brien 2008). Eventually their pay moved up to \$10 and four draughts (D. O'Reilly 2004).

<sup>198</sup> This bar is now known as McVeigh's New Windsor Tavern.

trip they played at the Strand Lounge in the Avalon Mall.<sup>199</sup> Despite its small sound system The Strand became a hub for touring musicians:

We played here first in a place called The Strand in the Avalon Mall, so we were coming here for almost 15 years...but when we started here in the Strand, we played through a 30-watt Boggen amp, which basically...was for announcing “no.2 your fish and chips is ready”...So it was a very strange thing actually. (R. O’Brien 2008)

Upon their return to Toronto they met Denis Ryan and invited him to Newfoundland for their next tour (see Rosenberg 1981, MUNFLA 81-267).

At one point they worked with the Irish Rovers’ manager who suggested they change their group name. So, on this advice they switched from the Dublin Ramblers to The Sons of Erin (D. O’Reilly 2004). During their time with this manager<sup>200</sup> they were sent off to small town Northern Ontario away from the large Toronto stages (see G. O’Brien 2008; O’Byrne 2010; Rosenberg 1981, MUNFLA 81-267). As they were not making much money O’Brien broke the contract and renegotiated the group with new members (R. O’Brien 2008).

Ralph O’Brien moved to Newfoundland in the mid-1970s and opened a bar on Water Street called Erin’s Pub in the 1980s. It was one of the first Irish bars in St. John’s and has since become a home of Irish and Newfoundland music in the city. The Sons of Erin are still performing with members coming and going. As Neil Rosenberg has pointed out, the turnover in line up has essentially provided an Irish music training ground for Newfoundland musicians (pers. comm. 2011).

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<sup>199</sup> The Strand was a bar inside St. John’s largest shopping mall and one of the very active live music venues in the 1970s. Eventually they opened two other locations in the city but closed down in the late 1990s or early 2000s. There will be more details on this bar later in the chapter.

<sup>200</sup> This manager tried (unsuccessfully) to dress them in stereotypical Irish green costumes (O’Brien, R. 2008). From Ralph’s tone, I suspect he found the suggestion to follow a stage Irish stereotype degrading.



The Sons of Erin have been a popular and important group in Newfoundland music. I could have easily done a case study on this group instead but chose Ryan's Fancy as they were more often mentioned to me by musicians I was working with as being an influence. Neil Rosenberg has worked with the Sons of Erin and offers the following comparison between the two groups. This commentary considers many issues, such as class, which I'd like to address in future work with Ryan's Fancy and possibly the Sons of Erin:

In the late 1960s-1970s Ryan's Fancy was not the only popular group of this sort. They were on CBC, while the Sons of Erin were on NTV. They had hit albums, while the Sons of Erin had *the* hit single of "Sonny's Dream." Ryan's Fancy hung out with the intellectual crowd and had their songbook published by Breakwater [Books] with an introduction by a MUN English prof<sup>201</sup>, while the Sons of Erin played to and associated with a more working-class crowd. No book, but Ralph O'Brien opened a bar on Water Street that has become an Irish-music mecca. Ryan's Fancy toured mainly in Eastern Canada, while the Sons of Erin played Irish pubs all over North America and beyond. Ryan's Fancy quit altogether in '82; the Sons of Erin carried on with changing personnel, less Irish and more Newfoundland. In that way the Sons of Erin became a training school for Newfoundland Irish musicians. (Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011)

### **6.3.2 O'Reilly's Men**

When O'Reilly, O'Byrne and Kavanagh parted company with O'Brien and The Sons of Erin, they spent several months gigging as O'Reilly's Men (O'Byrne 2010). Although the band was short lived they did tour as far as Antigonish, NS by way of Montreal (ibid.). Tours often take their toll on a group and the trio parted upon their return to Toronto. Kavanagh and O'Byrne joined Don Sullivan to form Sullivan's Gypsies. Dermot moved to Montreal (D. O'Reilly 2004).

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<sup>201</sup> Rosenberg is referring to Pat Byrne's 1977 book *The Ryan's Fancy Songbook (and Other Stuff)*.

### 6.3.3 *Sullivan's Gypsies*

The original group members were Don Sullivan, Fergus O'Byrne, Gary Kavanagh and a tenor banjo player from Northern Ireland named Vik Heaney (O'Byrne 2010). Heaney did not stay long and Denis Ryan and Dermot O'Reilly were invited to make it a five-piece band (O'Byrne 2010; D. O'Reilly 2004). Ryan had great respect for the band leader Don Sullivan. Ryan described Sullivan as "a fascinating entertainer, he was sort of magic, he could control an audience and [he was] a great writer" (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). Sullivan's Gypsies toured Newfoundland a few times, travelling to the Strand in St. John's, the Causeway Motel in Twillingate, the Gander Hotel, Grand Falls and the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula (D. Morris 1969, 3; O'Byrne 2010).<sup>202</sup>

A newspaper article explains how the members of the group felt very at home in Newfoundland, describing the Southern Shore as a "second Ireland" (D. Morris 1969, 3). Don Sullivan proclaimed: "you just have to listen to a few words from the southern shore people and you know the people came from Ireland, I've never heard such beautiful Irish brogue anywhere else in the world... outside the old sod" (ibid.).<sup>203</sup> Sullivan stated that he felt that there was a "spell over" Newfoundland as there was nowhere that they "felt more at home" than in Newfoundland (ibid.).<sup>204</sup> In 1970, Sullivan's Gypsies with fifth member Denis Ryan were playing in upper Manhattan, New York City (Deacy 1970, np).

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<sup>202</sup> Many of these places were inaccessible by road just a decade before and would have required a tour by coastal boat.

<sup>203</sup> On this tour the group was made up of Don Sullivan, Fergus O'Byrne, Gary Kavanagh and Dermot O'Reilly (D. Morris 1969, 3).

<sup>204</sup> The Southern Shore, south of St. John's, is recognized as a particularly Irish area of the island. Today it is known as the Irish loop. Dillon's 1968 study examines contemporary Anglo-Irish linguistic patterns and Gaelic remnants in the area.

Dermot O'Reilly stated that Sullivan's Gypsies split up during a tour to Newfoundland when, instead of coming to their last gig at the Strand, Sullivan decided to go moose hunting (2004).

#### **6.3.4 Ryan's Fancy**

Ryan's Fancy started when Ryan, O'Byrne and O'Reilly decided to form their own band as they always got along together very well (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). The name, Ryan's Fancy, came from a jig of the same name Denis had composed, called "Ryan's Fancy." This jig had been recorded with Sullivan's Gypsies on the Columbia Label (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591; Sullivan's Gypsies 1970).

Their first gig was at the Nag's Head pub in Toronto and by early 1971 they were dividing their time between Toronto and Halifax (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). In March 1971, they made their first pivotal trip to Newfoundland via Halifax with a gig at the Black Knight Lounge (L. Russell 1978, 20-21; see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). Ryan described the trip as follows:

The 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1971...we set out for Newfoundland. We left our wives and the few kids we had and we set out in a [Volkswagen] Beetle. [It was] stormy coming through Quebec. [We] had to drive 10-15 miles per hour, the three of us sitting in front of the Beetle, suitcases and guitars in the back of it. The night of the 17<sup>th</sup> March, we had a gig, the great St. Paddy's Day. We had a gig organized in Halifax; turned out it was a sell-out gig. It was in a club and we've never looked back since that really. The group performed 500% better than it ever had before....We played that weekend, the 17<sup>th</sup> of March in Halifax and we headed on in a VW for a gig promised us here [in St. John's] on...the 20<sup>th</sup> or the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. I'd made contacts here with the lads in the geology department. A lot of teachers were from Ireland and they were having a geology meeting in the Newfoundland Hotel, so we made that one. Our first gig in Newfoundland the Hotel Newfoundland. (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591)

#### ***6.4 Moving to Newfoundland***

By 1972, the *Evening Herald* of Dublin was celebrating Ryan's Fancy move to Newfoundland (1972, np). The Herald noted that unlike the other Irish-Canadian groups, Ryan's Fancy were based in St. John's rather than Toronto (ibid.). Attracted by their previous experiences here as musicians, the "intensity of the music" and the lure of being able to play music and attend university, all three musicians made the move together to St. John's (O'Byrne 2010; Ryan 2010). Ryan went into medicine but ended up completing a folklore degree, O'Byrne started in general studies, and O'Reilly wanted to study folklore or anthropology (O'Byrne 2010; D. O'Reilly 2004; Ryan 2010). After about a year and a half, they all left school in order to pursue music full time. Denis Ryan told me, "We all went off to Newfoundland and we got some gigs and just ploughed away, working on weekends and all going to school and working our asses off" (2010). O'Byrne painted a picture of himself trying to do homework between sets:

I have visions of myself being in the Strand Lounge sitting up at the bar trying to read English novels for English [courses] but it just didn't work. You weren't comprehending anything with people hanging off your shoulders and stuff like that (2010)

Once the television shows began they all decided to drop out of university as trying to balance family, school, gigging and producing a television show was overwhelming.

Newfoundland, in general, and St. John's, in particular, was very welcoming to the members of Ryan's Fancy, nicknaming them "the boys" (L. Russell 1978, 20). When they were in New York or Toronto they were a part of an Irish revival. Ryan felt that Newfoundland was different. He felt that there was a sense of continuity of tradition in province stating that "there [was] nothing to be revived; it's there already in a way" (see

Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). They found the environment in Newfoundland invigorating and it inspired them to seek out and learn new material (ibid.). Ryan feels that moving to Newfoundland was one of the “greatest exciting things that happened to us” (ibid.).

Ryan’s Fancy soon found consistent work as musicians. They regularly played the Strand Lounge in the Avalon Mall, a venue which Ryan described as the “best club in Canada” and they packed it with their fellow university students and young professionals (2010). In Newfoundland, these Irish musicians felt that there was a familiarity with their music. They then started learning and performing Newfoundland songs which they felt lent credibility to the local music for Newfoundlanders themselves (ibid.). O’Byrne described the audiences as not only being familiar with the music but being willing to participate and sing along (2010). He describes the general atmosphere of St. John’s as being more Irish than other areas of the country due to the similarity of accent and connection to Irish ancestors. This gave the feeling of being “immersed” in a culture similar to Ireland, and for these young men it made Newfoundland feel comfortable for them. Whereas audiences in Ontario enjoyed the music, O’Byrne explained that:

It seemed there was more of an understanding [in Newfoundland]...In Ontario you were playing to a mixed group of people...Whereas here everybody was either Irish or English or had all this music in the background...The idea of young people finally discovering that Newfoundland music was something to be proud of. We happened to come in and started doing, not only Irish...[but also] we started picking up on the local songs and learning them. (ibid.)

Ryan felt that there were many similarities between Newfoundland and Ireland. He cited getting into a taxi on one of his first trips to Newfoundland and talking to the driver, whose name was Joe Sullivan, and was convinced that the man must be from Cork

(2010). He also described his mother's first visit to Newfoundland when she danced a set in Flatrock, about 15 kilometers outside St. John's, and felt that she had never left Ireland (ibid.). Ryan expressed the opinion that the music and storytelling tradition is very strong in Newfoundland, especially down the Southern Shore in places like Renews, Fermeuse, Ferryland, Cape Broyle and Trepassey. He found a similarity to the sort of culture with which he had grown up in County Tipperary (ibid.). He notes, however, that unlike Cape Breton where instrumental music is very "powerful," the storytelling and singing tradition is stronger in Newfoundland (ibid.).

I found Newfoundland to be very rich in folksong...the folk song and storytelling in Newfoundland to be very similar to what I grew up in [in Ireland]....A lot of Newfoundland songs had Irish melodies to them...that really blew me away. They had a lot of the same feelings, the songs, the old ballads, the sadness, the immigration, the love, the whole thing. Newfoundland is phenomenal; we think that it was so isolated up to sixty, eighty years ago...but the music was alive and well all over the [province]. (ibid.)

Ryan describes the local music in Newfoundland when he arrived in the early 1970s as "very exciting." Ryan was especially excited as he travelled around to the outports and discovered that his own music "wasn't as new and creative as we thought it was... this stuff was all over the place" and "it mesmerized" him (ibid.).

I surmise that this feeling of being "home" had to do with moving to a reasonably small city with a small-town feel, where people were friendly and open to newcomers. Irish musicians who moved to the province in the 1970s felt as if traditional music had not made a significant transition to the stage and that they were role models for Newfoundland musicians (G. O'Brien 2008; Ryan 2010). In the early 1970s, there were limited recordings of Newfoundland music in comparison to recordings of Irish music or other traditions; however there were enough to fill a discography and the industry was

about to grow sustainably during the 1970s (Taft 1975).<sup>205</sup> There were only a few active recording musicians that played traditional music at the time, including Omar Blondahl, Wilf Doyle, Harry Hibbs and the television musical group *All Around the Circle*. Ryan's Fancy was a part of this transition and revival during which they recorded a lot of Irish music which was learned and re-played by Newfoundland musicians. At the same time, Ryan's Fancy promoted local Newfoundland music and musicians through their recordings and television shows.

The story of Irish musicians feeling at home in Newfoundland is repeated throughout this dissertation. Similarly, Newfoundland musicians see many similarities in Ireland when they visit [see Chapter Seven]. In the 1970s there is a repeated theme of how Irish musicians helped to take music out of the kitchens and bring it to the stage. As discussed in Chapter Four, Ryan's Fancy and other Irish bands were not the first to put Newfoundland or Irish traditional music on stage, on radio or recordings in the province. As previously mentioned, the idea that most Newfoundland traditional music was still played in houses for small groups seemed have struck a chord with Irish musicians. It likely recalled a vision of an older, possibly more authentic, idea of Irish music before the Dance Hall Act. The idea of Newfoundland traditional musics being in "rudimentary" stage intersects with the IFMCs 1954 definition of folk music cited early which sought folk music in communities unaffected by "popular [or] art music" (Almeida 1955, 23).

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<sup>205</sup> In Taft's discography (1904-1972) I counted about 26 Newfoundland groups or artists I would consider to have recorded Newfoundland and/or Irish music. While there was the start of a recording industry it had not yet reached a critical mass and was still starting off. The 1970s represents one of those eras in which many more recordings of local music were produced. My analysis suggests that the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has also seen a dramatic rise in local recording. As previously mentioned in Chapter Five, the online Newfoundland and Labrador discography available through the Centre of Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University is an invaluable tool.

While Chapter Four clearly demonstrated that Newfoundlanders have had cosmopolitan tastes and experiences back into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a burgeoning of urbanized traditional music and musical activities in St. John's in the 1970s.

During this time there were many folk music centred activities including the St. John's Folk Music Club. In the mid-70s Newfoundland was following other trends with coffee houses and folk clubs based on the English models (S. Hart and Murphy 1986, 28-29). Ryan's Fancy certainly did not have a monopoly on bringing folk music to the stage, this time period was ripe with music and theatrical arts which sought to revive Newfoundland arts and culture. In 1976 the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Council<sup>206</sup> started the annual provincial folk festival. The weekly folk club was started by Joan Kosby and Paul Mercer in the same year (S. Hart and Murphy 1986, 29; Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011).<sup>207</sup> Both events are still running and the Folk Arts Council adopted the folk club as part of their regular activities in the 1990s (Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011).

Ryan describes their popularity at the time as being part of "popular culture" of the day and a musical fad both in Newfoundland and wider North America (2010). By 1976, they were already packing concert halls throughout Atlantic Canada and turning down work in central and western Canada (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). In 1980, they performed at Disney World in Florida as Canadian musical representatives and they also played concerts for Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's political campaigns

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<sup>206</sup> Formerly the St John's Folk Arts Council, then the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Council, now the Folk Arts Society. For more information see their website (Folk Arts Society ca. 2012, np)

<sup>207</sup> The folk festival is held in August in Bannerman Park downtown St. John's. Folk night began at Bridgett's Pub on Cookstown Road and then moved to The Ship Inn off Duckworth Street. I would be very interested in exploring these events and their influence as I know the programming of these events has caused debates about what is Newfoundland music and what is folk music locally.



(Keane 2010; *Newfoundland Herald* 1981, 16). In 1981 they were still touring Newfoundland, the Maritimes, Western Canada and the States (*Newfoundland Herald* 1981, 16; Ralph 1981).

### ***6.5 Concerts and Stage Approaches***

Ryan's Fancy continued to maintain a stage presence after they were successful in television. In 1976, Denis Ryan had a very interesting conversation with folklorist Peter Narváez regarding their approach to stage performance and the music business. Ryan stated, "I'd say the first two years in our business we were very drunk a lot of the time, not conscious about, didn't give a fuck what we played once people were happy" (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). However, that cavalier attitude swung to the opposite extreme by 1976 when Ryan explained that they were "beginning to tighten up, writing stuff and perhaps becoming too selective in our material, maybe too much playing to ourselves, ...[before] we were just having a ball" (ibid.). Yet, at the same time, O'Byrne explained that they were "very savvy" when it came to stage banter and were able to interact with the audience in a witty manner (2010). They decided early in their career together to split up during breaks and make conversation with the audience in different parts of the room (ibid.). This allowed their audiences to feel they had a friendly connection with the musicians and made them even more popular. In this way Ryan's Fancy was maintaining the close audience-performer relationship expected from a folk music experience as discussed by Burns (2011) as well as by Narváez and Laba (1986, 1).

On the other hand clubs can be challenging. A reviewer in Calgary in 1980 stated that the bar was so raucous the band needed "to be louder than the noisiest drunks in the

audience” (Brennan 1981, D1). Ryan preferred the soft seat concert hall stating that it was the ideal location compared to a noisy bar where the band is often sonically “lost”. In the concert hall, Ryan feels that audience is giving you the “greatest honour” by buying a ticket to come see you. They have devoted their evening to listening, and are sitting quietly to focus on the music (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). Ryan stated that the concert stage is the best time to try new material aimed at an audience ready to hear it (ibid.).

That said, despite the raucousness, Ryan’s Fancy did not give up playing in clubs. They felt that they needed to play to all three of their audiences - clubs, concerts and television. The audiences might have been loud in clubs, but they and the managers appreciated the music. When Ryan’s Fancy was absent for a year from their “home” pub, the Strand, they were asked after on a regular basis by people they met on the street (ibid.).

### ***6.5.1 The Strand Lounge***

Ryan’s Fancy was a mainstay at the Strand during periods of the 1970s. Jack Kellum, producer of the television shows, stated that there was regularly a line-up at six o’clock for a nine o’clock show (2010). Folklorist Pat Byrne described his first introduction to a Ryan’s Fancy performance in 1972:

As I remember it, I did not react with a great deal of enthusiasm when Al suggested we should leave the bottle of rum half-finished and make our way to The Strand...[we] turned the corner of the corridor leading to The Strand. About fifty people pressed against the door; the remnants of what, two hours earlier had been an orderly queue. Half an hour later the muffled music stopped. The door flew open and my resolve to go somewhere sensible...and have a quiet beer was lost as the crowd behind us surged forward and we poured through the opening

just before the doorman's arm came down to stop the flood. The place was packed. When I left at closing time I was convinced that the waste of the half bottle of rum had been well worth it. (1977, 7)

Fergus O'Byrne stated in a practical manner that the existence of The Strand Lounge, and their willingness to hire Ryan's Fancy, made it possible for them to move to St. John's and make a living:

The support of The Strand Lounge to give us employment [was important] ...you could work seven nights a week, six nights a week, six and a half if you do a matinee....We could do that every three weeks and then it was only a matter of doing weekends out in Gander or out in Grand Falls (2010)

At the time there was a circuit for the few bands that were touring. Ryan's Fancy also played Gander and Grand Falls as well as a few smaller communities such as Bay de Verde and Ferryland (ibid.). In the early 1970s, the only other bar in St. John's at the time that hired bands was The Circle, but they focused more on rock and roll, whereas, the Strand had Irish, country and Newfoundland acts, amongst other touring groups (ibid.). Eventually, The Strand opened two other locations, downtown in Atlantic Place and at the Village Mall in the mid-1970s.<sup>208</sup> This allowed the band to perform a circuit within the city and have regular work near the city (ibid.).

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<sup>208</sup> According to Geoff Meeker, a reporter for the *Newfoundland Herald* from 1980-1988 who covered music venues, the Avalon Mall location was the original followed by the downtown location in Atlantic Place on Water Street and then the Village Mall. The downtown location was open in 1976 as he remembers going there then. He remembers the Village Mall location, opened in 1978, being more rock and roll oriented with the Avalon Mall tending to have more traditional music (Meeker pers. comm. 2011)

## 6.6 Touring the Maritimes

Ryan's Fancy had a big following throughout the Maritimes (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick) as well as in Newfoundland. They played Halifax's Black Knight Lounge and several pubs in Antigonish, Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick. One of the means of touring Atlantic Canada came when Brookes Diamond, later promoter of Rita McNeil and the Barra McNeils, hired them for the university circuit for "beer bashes" like Winterfest (ibid.). They toured campuses including Sydney Tech, St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish, Dalhousie, St. Mary's, the Agricultural College in Truro, and the University of Prince Edward Island (ibid.). Fergus O'Byrne described the concerts as follows:

We did that for several years and they were just huge events, a thousand, two thousand kids in a gymnasium. [They were] drinking beer to beat the band and we'd be the entertainment. They were just loud [and] raucous. [There was] not a very big sound system when I think about it. (ibid.)

## 6.7 Albums and Repertoire

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the members of Ryan's Fancy recorded two albums with Sullivan's Gypsies and one with The Sons of Erin (Sullivan's Gypsies 1969, 1970). As a group, Ryan's Fancy issued thirteen albums between the early 1970s and 1982.<sup>209</sup> Denis Ryan has recorded four solo albums (1991, 1999/2000, 2005); and Fergus O'Byrne has recorded three albums in combination with Tickle Harbour (1998), Jim Payne (1995) and A Crowd of Bold Sharemen (2002) and one in 2010 named *Shore to*

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<sup>209</sup> For a list of the albums please see either the Bibliography and/or Appendix Ten: List of Audiovisual Materials (1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1972a, 1972b, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1981, 2002, 2011). Two albums were re-issues of other albums: *Sea People* was a re-issue of an earlier album titled *Brand New Songs* and *15 Great Drink-a-long Songs* was a re-issue of *An Irish Night at the Black Knight Lounge*. A "retrospective" type album was released in February 2011.

*Shore* (Wren Trust et al.). Dermot O'Reilly released two musical documentaries exploring the music of Newfoundland and Labrador (1988, 1991). In 2002, a new Ryan's Fancy album was released, titled *Ryan's Fancy: Songs from the Shows*. It is comprised of fifteen tracks of archival songs from their television shows. Thirteen of these songs had not been previously released (Bowers 2002, 17; Ryan's Fancy 2002). A forty-year retrospective album *What a Time!* was released 2011.

To appeal across the country Ryan's Fancy tried to balance the Newfoundland and Irish parts of their repertoire. Ryan felt that in Newfoundland there was a call for more Irish songs while, on mainland Canada, Newfoundlanders "living away" wanted Newfoundland songs (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). As Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham (1972, 400) pointed out, audience is always considered by a musician in making repertoire selections. Why would audiences in Newfoundland want to hear Irish music? While there could be many reasons and without an in-depth audience study I cannot say for sure, I would suggest that it likely had to do negative attitudes towards Newfoundland music which are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Remembering that Newfoundland had come through a difficult crisis of identity after Confederation and many rejected their Newfoundland culture as backward and unsophisticated they turned to music which had a wider appeal. Despite the best efforts of the Newfoundland cultural revival, many people were embarrassed by "Newfie" music especially as compared to an internationally recognized tradition like Irish music. Irish music was worldly, it had travelled, been accepted by listeners in major cities, signed by recording companies and had a clear history. Ironically, Newfoundland music was equated with the Irish-Newfoundland show which had replaced the *Big 6 McNulty* show

and played McNulty inspired Newfoundland musicians such as accordionists Wilf Doyle and Harry Hibbs.<sup>210</sup> Ryan's Fancy was new in the mid-1970s and had been recognized nationally and internationally. The fact that they chose to live in St. John's was appreciated. They were well-liked and while it was known they were Irish, not native Newfoundlanders, I would suggest that they, like the McNultys, were generally accepted as Newfoundlanders. Ryan's Fancy sang songs which were both local and international. As evidenced by the brief album analysis below, Ryan's Fancy were the first to record many of these transnational songs in the province and perhaps some of these songs were new to Newfoundland audiences.

In large Canadian cities like Toronto, there were other bands playing the same transnational repertoire as Ryan's Fancy so ex-pat Newfoundlanders could hear that music played by any number of bands. Perhaps the appeal in attending a Ryan's Fancy show was nostalgia. Ex-pat Newfoundlanders knew Ryan's Fancy would sing the specific Newfoundland songs which recalled their musical senses of place.

Ryan's Fancy had a varied repertoire of Irish, English, Scottish and Newfoundland songs yet O'Byrne feels that their repertoire has been retroactively re-cast as Irish-Newfoundland music. He does understand that to the regular audience member not invested in the musical roots of a song, there is no conflict in broad labelling (2010). By way of example, he cites a YouTube.com video of a group singing "The Rocky Road to Dublin" in a Dublin pub. The caption read, "Wow! Newfie music in a Dublin pub!" (ibid.). While this may seem to be a joke, Ryan's Fancy's version of "Rocky Road to

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<sup>210</sup> As mentioned earlier, the McNultys were so well accepted that they were often considered to be Newfoundlanders and contributed to the basic sound of Irish-Newfoundland music.

Dublin” is immensely popular in Newfoundland and when I first heard it on mainland Canada my first emotional response was the same.<sup>211</sup> Of course, another two seconds of critical thought made me realize I had been mistaken! For the above audience member, this song and Ryan’s Fancy, are strongly and uncritically related to their Newfoundland musical sense of place. Other songs have also been adopted under the Irish-Newfoundland rubric. Accordionist Ray Walsh believes there are very few completely original Newfoundland instrumental tunes, he makes a big distinction between Newfoundland composed songs and Irish songs:

You can go anywhere, anywhere in Newfoundland and you’ll hear Irish music. Some people think that this is our music, “Molly Bawn” is obviously not a Newfoundland song, “The Wild Rover” is definitely not a Newfoundland song, but some people think that [they are] Newfoundland song[s]. (2008)

“Molly Bawn” was recorded by the McNulty Family and their version became very popular in Newfoundland (McGraw 2010e, 465-466). The “Wild Rover” is a song sung by many Irish groups and Harry Hibbs was the first Newfoundlander to record the song (1968b).

In the ten different albums issued by Ryan’s Fancy between 1970 and 1982 there were 120 distinct song tracks. [Please see Appendix Five.] Sixty-six of these songs appear to have been recorded for the first time in Newfoundland by Ryan’s Fancy.<sup>212</sup> There are another twenty-five tracks which had been recorded previously by other

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<sup>211</sup> I had come to know the song through the Irish Descendants version which was, I believe, inspired by Ryan’s Fancy.

<sup>212</sup> Five of these tracks were difficult to search and confirm other recordings. Four of them were instrumental tracks with generic names such as “Newfoundland set tunes,” “Polkas,” “Kerry Slides,” and “selection of jigs.” The other was a song named “Love Song” which was too broad a name to use for a data base.

Newfoundland groups. Eleven of these tracks were local songs from Newfoundland or Nova Scotia such as “I’s da B’ye,” “Peter Emberley,” “Star of Logy Bay” and “Farewell to Nova Scotia.” There is also a selection of Irish repertoire, some of which had earlier been recorded by the McNulty family – songs such as “Far away in Australia.” [Please see Appendix Four.]

The sixty-six songs that Ryan’s Fancy or Sullivan’s Gypsies seem to have introduced into the Newfoundland repertoire have been re-recorded 344 times in the past forty years. The other twenty-five songs generally represent locally composed repertoire and have been recorded a total of 665 times with all but 124 of those recordings released after the Ryan’s Fancy recordings. This shows that while introduced music was significant there was still a penchant for locally composed songs. Breaking down these numbers further, shows that the majority of these re-recordings have been in the past two decades when Newfoundland bands such as The Punters,<sup>213</sup> Great Big Sea, and The Irish Descendants recorded a number of Ryan’s Fancy tunes in the 1990s. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century eighty-four different tracks were re-recorded 420 times. In the 1990s, sixty-three songs recorded by Ryan’s Fancy were recorded 292 times. In the 1980s, thirty-six of Ryan’s Fancy songs were re-recorded 97 times. In 1970s, thirty-three of the Ryan’s Fancy songs were current and re-recorded by their contemporaries 120 times.

Terry MacDonald has pointed out much of the mediated song repertoire is constructed as Irish not due to song origin, but because it is sung by Newfoundland bands

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<sup>213</sup> The Punters are folk-traditional rock band based in St. John’s, NL. The key members are singer-guitarist Larry Foley and fiddler Patrick Moran. The group formed in the 1990s and have issued six albums based on Newfoundland, Irish-Newfoundland repertoire and original songs. They have toured throughout Canada and performed many shows in New York and Boston (Avondale Music ca. 2011, np).



who are considered to be culturally Irish (1999, 189). I believe the significant re-recording of Ryan's Fancy repertoire indicates that during the third Irish/Celtic revival of the 1990s and 2000s, Newfoundland musicians looked back to their childhoods, to music they heard their parents listen to and play. They therefore identify Ryan's Fancy's music with their experience of Newfoundland music and have begun to revive it on recordings and on stage.

Ryan's Fancy had a significant impact through their recordings, particularly on musicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century who as children listened to their parents' music. Bob Hallett of Great Big Sea credits Ryan's Fancy with inspiring him to become a musician. As he states in his memoir, *Writing Out the Notes*, "It is pretty safe to say that without Dermot O'Reilly, Dennis Ryan and Fergus O'Byrne, aka Ryan's Fancy, I would not be playing music for a living" (2010, 27). Similar to the listening to the McNulty Family with their family, they watched the *Ryan's Fancy Show* with their parents. These early experiences had a significant impact on their musical sense of place of which Ryan's Fancy became a major part.

## **6.8 Television Shows**

One of the unique aspects of Ryan's Fancy was their television shows and in particular, their approach to showcasing Newfoundland culture through documentary and folklore style interviews. I suggest that in this way, this group of Irishmen participated in the Newfoundland cultural revival and nationalist movement discussed in the opening chapters. Through television, Ryan's Fancy reached a large audience and helped create cultural impressions of Newfoundland more strongly than was possible with recordings.

The medium of television allowed them to bring music, visuals and information about Newfoundland to Canadian and international viewers as well as Newfoundland and Labrador audiences. I believe Ryan's Fancy's intent was to highlight local culture and support the contemporary construction of Newfoundland musical sense of place through outport culture.

In the early 1970s, the members of Ryan's Fancy were invited to Halifax to be guests on the national television show *Singalong Jubilee* (Ryan 2010).<sup>214</sup> They also appeared on other national shows such as *The Tommy Hunter Show*, *The Denny Doherty Show*, and *All Around the Circle* (Kelly 2004, 43). In 1973 and 1974 the *Tommy Makem and Ryan's Fancy* show out of Hamilton was aired. Then a local CBC Newfoundland show began in 1974 which turned national for a year in 1976. In 1977, Ryan's Fancy became semi-regular hosts of *Canadian Express* shows which aired until 1982. In 1979 and 1980 the group did several "super-specials."<sup>215</sup> In the late 1970s, Ryan's Fancy also hosted several of the CBC's *Heritage* shows.<sup>216</sup> Starting in 1975, the second year of their Newfoundland series, they began travelling throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and then Atlantic Canada. The group conducted interviews with musicians and recorded music in the landscapes and environments in which it was performed. This technique not only made for interesting viewing but tied Ryan's Fancy and the music firmly to a rural musical sense of place. This was a format they used until the end of their television

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<sup>214</sup> Subsequently they appeared on *Singalong Jubilee* another half a dozen times (Ryan 2010).

<sup>215</sup> In the early 1980s CBC used "Super Shows" or "Super-Specials" to refer particularly to musical variety performances aired on Sunday nights (Allan 1996b, np).

<sup>216</sup> The Queen's University CBC data base says that the *Heritage* series was a religion based show (Allan 1996a). This is certainly not the basis of the shows I viewed in the MUNFLA collection ("Ryan's Fancy: People of the Islands," In Ryan 2004, MUNFLA 2004-338). Perhaps it was a local production of the same name I have not yet been able to track down any other information.

careers in 1982.<sup>217</sup> I was, unfortunately, unable to view the first season of the Newfoundland CBC series in which musicians were interviewed in studio. This season included fiddler Rufus Guinchard and McNulty Family singer Eileen Mc-Nulty Grogan. Denis Ryan and Fergus O’Byrne both cited their television shows as being their most important contribution. The following sections outline the history of the group’s television career as well as examine their documentary-style approach to a music variety show.

#### ***6.8.1 Tommy Makem and Ryan’s Fancy***

In the early 1970s, the producer of *Singalong Jubilee*, Manny Pittson, began working for an independent station in Hamilton, Ontario (CHCH-TV). At CHCH-TV, he produced the final four seasons of *Don Messer’s Jubilee* and a local Toronto show *Harry Hibbs at the Caribou*, to which he added the *Tommy Makem and Ryan’s Fancy* show (Pittson 2010c). As there were only two national television networks in the country at the time, CTV and CBC, these shows were syndicated and sold to CTV (Ryan 2010).

After the success of the *Harry Hibbs at the Caribou Club* [see Chapter Four], Pittson decided to try a show with Ryan’s Fancy. He had been impressed with their polished music and their reliable and sober demeanour when they aired on a CBC show called the *Gazette* (2010c). Pittson was seeking a nationally viable show which had the

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<sup>217</sup> With the help of YouTube.com and a collection of video and audio tapes deposited in Memorial University of Newfoundland’s Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) I was able to view a cross-section of the shows in which Ryan’s Fancy was involved (Kellum 1977b; see Kellum 1976a; Kellum 1976b; Pittson ca. 1973a, ca. 1973b; Pittson ca. 1974a, ca. 1974b, ca. 1974c, ca. 1974d; Ryan 2004, MUNFLA 2004-338). There is another MUNFLA collection of Ryan’s Fancy shows which is currently not viewable as the archive lacks the proper machine to view that type of film (Kellum and Wareham 1977, MUNFLA 77-264).

same appeal as the Hibbs show. He described his appraisal of the members of Ryan's Fancy as follows:

I sensed that Ryan's Fancy were steady enough musically to deal with, but with a Caribou-like atmosphere while keeping the homey approach to folk music that was closely related to Harry's repertoire. The CHCH management swallowed hard when I suggested a series similar to Harry's but featuring Irish folk music ranging from the genteel to the bawdy presented by Ryan's Fancy and Tommy Makem. (2010a)

In 1973, Ryan's Fancy was offered a syndicated show produced by Pittson out of Hamilton. However the station CHCH-TV felt that their name was not quite big enough. Denis Ryan called on his idol Tommy Makem to join the show, which he did for three years and they made seventy-four shows together (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). Pittson noted that Tommy Makem added "more credibility thanks to his established position in the international folk scene... his experience and encyclopaedic knowledge of Celtic music" (2010a). This pairing with Makem, and the all-Irish guest roster, clearly placed Ryan's Fancy, now a Newfoundland band, within the international Irish folk revival context. It is entirely likely that this show was the first exposure some Canadian and international audiences had to a band from Newfoundland. As the members of Ryan's Fancy were clearly Irish, and Newfoundland was still articulating its place within Canada, the two blended together to equate Newfoundland with Irishness.<sup>218</sup>

*The Tommy Makem and Ryan's Fancy Show* was filmed live at the Hamilton Irish club. The band would fly from St. John's to Hamilton and spend two weeks recording

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<sup>218</sup> I am unaware if they performed any Newfoundland songs on this show as my viewing of it has been limited. Even if audiences did not immediately equate Ryan's Fancy with Newfoundland they soon would with the national series just a few years later thus completing the Newfoundland- Irish connection.

eight shows. Rehearsals started on Tuesday, two shows were recorded each night on Friday and Saturday before a live audience (O'Byrne 2010). The set was a simple blue screen background, a stage with brown and green arches, and shaggy astro-turf carpet. The audience sat at round tables throughout the room sometimes with beer. Beer was discouraged in later shows so as not to encourage drunkenness on television (Pittson 2010c). The audience was drawn from the Hamilton Irish Canadian Association membership (ibid.). Pittson described the relation with the audience as follows:

Our taping sked [schedule] allowed for plenty of time for the performers and audience to interact. The ladies of the Irish Canadian club baked the soda bread and poured the tea. There was no bar that I recall but plenty of opportunities for importing flasks of anything you liked. We were very careful to present a package of entertainment that reflected Irish Canadians as sober, hardworking and loyal to their roots as well as to their adopted country. However, I don't recall seeing a picture of the Queen in the club rooms. The atmosphere was relaxed and cordial. The audience was in the place two to three hours per session and were never kept waiting by technical or production details. The one exception was the dark and stormy night the Chieftains flew in fresh from a triumph at Carnegie Hall. The group seemed genuinely pleased to be in Canada and no one in the audience objected to staying in the hall until the wee smalls. It was a memorable evening for Irish folk music. (2010b)

Tommy Makem, the host, stood on stage right slightly apart and introduced Ryan, O'Byrne and O'Reilly collectively as Ryan's Fancy rather than individuals. There were also off-camera musicians such as the regular bass player Fred McKenna (O'Byrne 2010). For their first two numbers the guests appeared on a small raised platform

amongst the audience and on stage for their final piece (for example see Pittson ca. 1974d).<sup>219</sup>

Each show featured Irish musicians, many of whom later became internationally famous in the Irish music revival. Musicians were recruited from Dublin through a man named Gerry O'Grady. In 1972, Pittson and Ryan flew to Dublin at least once to oversee the auditions (2010c). One of the guests was Triona Ní Dhomhnaill, harpsichordist and member of the then fledgling Irish super-group The Bothy Band (Pittson ca. 1973b). Similarly, The Chieftains, who went on to international stardom, happened to be touring in New York and agreed to appear on the show (O'Byrne 2010 ; Pittson 2010b). O'Byrne explained that these now international names were not yet famous:

They weren't really big names at the time. They were just, people who were [the] same [as] us...looking for gigs and were playing. I guess, Triona Ni Dhomhanaill [of the Bothy Band]...was just sort of getting underway. Obviously we couldn't afford to bring over the [whole] Bothy Band....but Triona would come over on her own and Al O'Donnell and Paddy Reilly....The Chieftains were kind of a coup because they happened to be passing through and they were approached and they said yes they would do it. We did a special show around [them], but it was still a live performance. (2010)

As of 2010, episodes six and seven are available for viewing on YouTube.com. These episodes feature Al O'Donnell and Triona Ni Dhomhanaill (Pittson ca. 1973a, ca. 1973b). Other episodes featured guitarist Paddy Reilly, harpist Mira Brennan, father and daughter duo Pat and Claire Creeann, on tin whistle and fiddle, and guitarist Gemma Hassin

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<sup>219</sup> Shows featuring Ryan's Fancy and produced or directed by Kellum or Pittson can be viewed in Denis Ryan's collection (MUNFLA 2004-338). For sake of clarity I will refer only to the show from this point forward.

(Pittson ca. 1974a, ca. 1974b, ca. 1974c, ca. 1974d). Pittson explained their informal approach to selecting guests:

The guest list was compiled by me in consultation with Tommy and Denis. There was no science – we simply consulted our own record collections, double checked with Dublin’s leading folk music critic and then made our choices. If memory serves, we offered negotiated fees in the \$250 range per show. I can’t recall how we handled ground costs but the Sheraton Connaught was offering singles during the Messer era for \$9.00 per night. My favourite guest was Leon Rowsome a bear of a man whose instrument was the traditional uilleann (elbow) pipes, which are pumped by a bellows strapped to the musician’s body under the elbow. By its appearance a fiendishly difficult instrument to master, it has a delicate, plaintive sound that speaks of the Celtic world long gone. (2010b)

While the *Tommy Makem and Ryan’s Fancy Show* never aired in Newfoundland it was syndicated to CTV, ATV in the Maritimes, and picked up in England, Ireland, and Australia (O’Byrne 2010). Ryan’s Fancy eventually toured Ireland but they were unable to follow up in Australia as they had no manager and did all their own bookings (ibid.).

#### ***6.8.2 Folklore Television: Ryan’s Fancy Newfoundland Show***

In 1973, Jack Kellum the producer of *This Land* (the national version of *Land and Sea*) moved from Toronto to St. John’s (Kellum 2010). Once in St. John’s it was suggested to Kellum that he should seek a national series on the network and that perhaps he might consider Ryan’s Fancy (ibid.). The local CBC obviously saw Ryan’s Fancy as their best Newfoundland representative for a national appeal. Kellum and Ryan soon sat down to discuss what type of show they might put together and decided to organize it thematically. Each show featuring a guest who related to that show’s theme (ibid.). As Kellum explained:

The guest didn't have to be a musician or a singer [or a] songwriter. The guest could be a poet...I don't think we ever had a graphic artist per se; they were always musically oriented one way or another, but the guest always had to be related to the theme of the show. If the theme of the show was fishing songs, the guest's, heritage and culture had to be fishing...that had to be his comfort zone. (ibid.).

In 1974 they started the *Ryan's Fancy* television show in Newfoundland with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). In 1975, Ryan's Fancy and Kellum began producing shows around the province featuring musicians from the outports. This led to a 13-week, national *Ryan's Fancy* series in 1976 (Kellum 2010; Ryan 2010). In 1977, Irish television RTÉ picked up the national series and according to Ryan, it was the most popular show in Ireland that year (2010). The national series was repeated on CBC in 1978 (*Newfoundland Herald* 1978, 26). In 1977, the *Ryan's Fancy* full-length show was cancelled and the group continued with fifteen-minute segments on *Canadian Express*, a national show which featured acts from coast to coast (S. Fitzgerald 1977, 22-23; Lockyer n.d., np).

The Newfoundland *Ryan's Fancy* shows were written and researched by Al Pittman (1940-2001)<sup>220</sup> and Wilf Wareham<sup>221</sup> who travelled throughout Atlantic Canada to small communities, profiling the regional music and talent. They also interviewed musicians in studio. As Denis Ryan explained:

We had a theme for each show. That's when we brought in Rufus Guinchard. His first time in St. John's I think was with the *Ryan's Fancy Show*. All these...I call them old timers...we'd interview them in the studio. That was a big breakthrough. (2010)

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<sup>220</sup> Al Pittman was a celebrated Newfoundland writer, poet, playwright, literature professor and one of the founders of Newfoundland publishing house Breakwater Books (P. Byrne 2002, np).

<sup>221</sup> Wilf Wareham is a folklorist who earned his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania and worked at Memorial University. He is part of the Wareham family from Placentia Bay who were merchants and ran a shipping schooner business. His brother Baxter Wareham is a well-known accordion player.



Part of the show's appeal was because there was no other music-based show interviewing musicians from the pre-stage era.<sup>222</sup> Jack Kellum explained that after their very first show with singer Morris Hogan from Flatrock they decided it would be best to travel to the singer's homes rather than bring them into studio (2010).<sup>223</sup> He felt there was too great an "alienation factor" in the studio and being in familiar surroundings would put the musicians more at ease (ibid.). That first season netted musicians such as Eileen McNulty-Grogan of the McNulty Family from New Jersey<sup>224</sup> in the studio as well as Newfoundland musicians, Rufus Guinchard, Emile Benoit, Pius Power, Andy Short and Minnie White (O'Byrne 2010).<sup>225</sup>

The 1975 local series and the 1976 national shows saw Ryan's Fancy travel throughout Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland. [Please see Map Seven below.] The format of the show consisted of an opening and closing segment in the studio, and a larger middle segment recorded in the field. In 1975 they did about six or seven shows in the studio and the others in the field (Kellum 2010). That year, they did shows on the Bonavista Line, one of the last passenger trains in Newfoundland,<sup>226</sup> which ran from Clarenville to Bonavista; a show about the illegal rum-running trade between Bay

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<sup>222</sup> *Land & Sea*, hosted by Dave Quinton, and produced by Jack Kellum, also highlighted Newfoundland outport culture but from an occupational standpoint.

<sup>223</sup> They were not able to start this technique until the second season.

<sup>224</sup> As previously mentioned Kellum had difficulty locating Eileen as he was told by a number of Newfoundlanders that the McNultys were from Newfoundland (Kellum 2010).

<sup>225</sup> Guinchard would appear on the show half a dozen times over the years but his first appearance was the first time the 74-year-old had been on a plane. He was accompanied by Nurse Bennett's son, Trevor Bennett (Kellum 2010).

<sup>226</sup> The last passenger service was ended in 1988 and ran from Bishop's Falls to Corner Brook (Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011). The mixed passenger-freight service on the Bonavista Line was closed in 1984 along with the Carbonear and Argentia branches (Penney and Kennedy [1993] 2003, 154). The Bonavista Line was a regular source of transportation into St. John's for residents of the area. My relatives from this area used it to go to St. John's and the McNultys would have used it to travel between their shows in Clarenville and Bonavista.

D'Espoir and the French Islands of Saint Pierre et Miquelon; a “time” or dance in the school in South East Bight, PB; and a show on miners in St. Lawrence on the Burin Peninsula (Kellum 2010; Murphy n.d.-c, np). The 1975 local series convinced CBC to grant the group a national series in 1976. This series included shows throughout Atlantic Canada (*Evening Herald* 1976, np; Kellum 2010).



Map Seven: Ryan's Fancy: Television Shows Locations

Many of the shows filmed on location represented a revival of music in the area which turned Ryan's Fancy into advocates for the preservation of local music and culture.<sup>227</sup> For example, prior to the filming, there had not been a milling frolic held in the Codroy Valley for ten years. Similarly, there had not been a "time" in the school for twelve years in South East Bight, PB. Several shows were repeated due to popular demand. Ryan laments that the cameras were not on at 4 or 5 am when "everyone [was] holding hands around the table"<sup>228</sup> (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 78-591). My focus here is on the Newfoundland shows. In many ways the *Ryan's Fancy Show* allowed people from distant parts of the province to see similarities and differences in various regions of the island and Labrador.

The localized aspect of the show required a lot of research by documentary maker Jack Kellum and folklorist Wilf Wareham. The musicians also did research. Ryan explained that for the farming show in Prince Edward Island he read a song book about singer Lawrence Doyle from "cover to cover" and interviewed local people regarding the best repertoire (the book was likely Ives 1971; see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). In Newfoundland, Ryan sought songs not represented in the major collections by going out to do his own fieldwork (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591).

Fergus O'Byrne feels that this series is of great educational value and should be re-released for general distribution on DVD. As he put it, a re-release should be:

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<sup>227</sup> For the early shows, there is a much higher incidence of shows on the eastern side of the island, closer to the Avalon Peninsula and St. John's. They were only able to venture further afield once they had national funding.

<sup>228</sup> In Placentia Bay and other regions of Newfoundland it was common place for singers to hold hands with their audience. This practice was shown in another of the *Ryan's Fancy* shows filmed in Branch, St. Mary's Bay (Kellum 1977a).

not for the Ryan's Fancy content, [but] for the content [of] Rufus and Emile and Pius, and just the community scenes, and what you saw of the fishery. It's... historical documentation of what was going on in the seventies in the province and in the Maritimes and kids don't see that anymore. (2010)

The show was extremely popular when it aired and even now O'Byrne meets people around the province who describe their experiences of watching the show when they were children. He describes an often repeated scenario:

I've heard people say; every Friday... Mom and Dad would put us in front of the TV. [laughs] It was sort of a church experience; people *had* to watch it... Everybody watched it... [as there were] only... two television channels obviously more people would see it. (ibid.)

As I have already suggested the *Ryan's Fancy Show* gave a perspective on Newfoundland culture to non-Newfoundlanders. I would suggest that the show helped create a strong musical sense of place for Newfoundlanders themselves as they saw their own culture reflected in a nationally popular documentary show. Kellum stated that there were often audience ratings of approximately 800,000 to one million viewers for the national series (2010). Dayan and Katz speak of "primary" and "secondary" audiences. Although they speak about large ceremonial events, the same idea can be used here. Nationally and internationally, the secondary audiences gathered impressions about the new Canadian province where expressive culture is rural based (the focus of the shows) and overseen by Irish musicians. For the primary audience of Newfoundlanders there was the familiarity of landscapes, people and communities that they possibly knew. According to Adams this sort of gathering allows for a "bounded system in which symbolic interaction among persons occurs (a social context)" as well as "a nucleus around which ideas, values and shared experiences are constructed" (1992, 118). As suggested by Fiske, television

audiences create their own “imagined communities” (1993, xvi) and the Newfoundland audiences of the *Ryan’s Fancy Show* had a double layer of meaning in that they likely knew many of the physical locations featured in the show. Similar to Monty Barfoot’s experience of listening to the McNulty Family on radio, the *Ryan’s Fancy Show* created a reason to gather together socially.

### **6.8.3 *Canadian Express***

In 1977, CBC changed its variety show format; they cancelled the Newfoundland *Ryan’s Fancy Show* and in a single one-hour show featured five or six groups from different parts of the country (Kellum 2010). Jack Kellum continued to produce the Ryan’s Fancy portion of *Canadian Express* and said that because Ryan’s Fancy lost an entire national series, they retained the “lion’s share” of the hosting opportunities (ibid.). Whether or not the group were hosting the show, *Ryan’s Fancy* interviewed a guest from Atlantic Canada each week (ibid.). In such a show, Ryan’s Fancy was clearly positioned to represent Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada. One week the featured guest was then little-known singer Stan Rogers (Kellum 1977b). As Fergus O’Byrne described:

Stan Rogers was a featured guest on our show and that’s how Stan Rogers really came to be known...Canada-wide in terms of television exposure. It was our show that sort of featured him...have you ever seen the clip on YouTube of ourselves and Stan Rogers doing “Barrett’s Privateers”?...It’s Stan, his brother Garnet, his bass player David, David Woodhead I think, and us sitting around the table in his ancestral cottage down Canso area doing “Barrett’s Privateers.” (2010)

Each city had a host: in Winnipeg it was Tom Jackson; in Toronto it was Roger Abbot and Don Ferguson who later went on to become the *Royal Canadian Air Farce*.

Cities that hosted needed CBC studios. Those cities were Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax and St. John's (Kellum 2010).<sup>229</sup>

#### **6.8.4 Super Specials**

In 1979 and 1980 Ryan's Fancy did a series of five television specials for CBC. Two of them took place at Kings Landing Historical Settlement in Prince William, NB (Kellum 1979),<sup>230</sup> one in Ireland (Kellum 1980),<sup>231</sup> and one in Arnold's Cove, PB, NL (Lockyer n.d., np; *Newfoundland Herald* 1979, 24). The fifth television special was a fictional children's story called "Pirate's Gold" filmed at Ferryland, NL (Kellum 1983, 2010; Lockyer n.d., np; *Newfoundland Herald* 1980a, 59).

#### **6.9 Fieldwork as Part of the Ryan's Fancy Show**

Fieldwork was the unique and defining aspect of the *Ryan's Fancy Show*. No other music variety show in Canada featured fieldwork as part of its regular preparation.

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<sup>229</sup> Kellum found *Canadian Express* somewhat challenging as each city had a different producer. These producers did not necessarily share a vision of how the show should look, resulting in a different approach from each place. For example, the medium differed; Kellum used film whereas everyone else used video (Ibid.).

<sup>230</sup> Both specials filmed at King's Landing were historical fiction tales set during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first special, *All in a Summer's Day*, told the story of a little boy trying to buy a gift for his mother. Each member of the group was a fictional villager at Kings Landing; Denis Ryan was an Irish immigrant, Fergus O'Byrne the inn keeper, Dermot O'Reilly a farmer, Allister McGillivray a sailor and James Keane a travelling musician (O'Byrne 2010).

The second show at King's Landing was a Christmas special and featured guests including the Cape Breton Mik'maw fiddler Lee Cremo and old English Christmas carols (*Newfoundland Herald* 1980c, 60). For both of these specials the group researched and learned period music (Ibid.). Disaster struck the set when it rained and all the snow melted. The dilemma was solved by bringing in snow from a local hockey rink and patting it down with horse and cart (Murphy n.d.-b, np).

For more information on Kings Landing please refer to their website (Kings Landing Historical Settlement ca. 2012, np).

<sup>231</sup> As Ryan's Fancy had been touring back in Ireland each summer, they produced a special entitled *Home Boys Home* in Ireland. This featured Ryan's Fancy performing in Denis Ryan's hometown and a few other locations.

While it was Kellum's idea, they drew on Wilf Wareham's expertise as a professional Newfoundland folklorist to make it happen. As a folklore student and leader of the group, Denis Ryan conducted the majority of on-screen interviews. As part of their fieldwork for the show the group travelled the island visiting small communities and meeting musicians. It was Jack Kellum's documentary film background that allowed them to travel light with only one camera and three or four crew members.<sup>232</sup> This is a small load in comparison to what Kellum described as the usual travel setup of twenty crew and large cameras (Kellum 2010). After a meeting that produced about twenty ideas for thirteen shows, Wilf Wareham and poet Al Pittman, the show's researcher and writer, were sent out to find guests (ibid.). Wareham explained that their initial fieldwork approach was quite informal. He and Al Pittman drove to the community in which they were interested, and simply "asked around." They knocked on a few doors and got to know people informally (pers. comm. 2010). Once they had identified people who were interested in participating, they returned to Kellum and presented a plan (ibid.). Once approved, the cast and crew returned to the community to film the show. Their goal was to find musicians in small communities who were not known outside of their regions. In this manner they sought to bring the local to a wider audience and in turn associated Ryan's Fancy with a series of highly localized areas and traditions.

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<sup>232</sup> Cameraman Bill Murphy wrote several memories of his time with Ryan's Fancy for the Ryan's Fancy website (Lockyer n.d., np). Murphy commented on their ingenuity in devising ways of getting the type of shots they wanted with such limited resources. He cited one example of this flexibility when they travelled to a camp outside of Nain in Northern Labrador. Electricity was only available in the lodge but the group wanted to film songs outside in the wilderness. Having no way to power the cameras, they devised a way to run the cameras off skidoo batteries (Murphy n.d.-a, np).

As mentioned earlier, Kellum and Ryan's *Fancy* decided early in the series they would interview guests in their "home environment" whenever possible in order to make them more comfortable. This worked to construct a musical sense of place in a number of ways. First, by moving out of a placeless television studio and into the rural communities of Newfoundland it instantly constructed Newfoundland music as rural music. This followed the idea of generations of folksong collectors who sought "real" folksongs in rural and isolated environments (for example Creighton, Karpeles, Sharp). This construction of musical sense of place was in line with the contemporary neo-nationalist intellectuals in St. John's such as Ray Guy and Ted Russell who were also constructing Newfoundland culture as part of the bygone days of the outports. By focusing on rural environments and framing older residents as tradition bearers, Ryan's *Fancy* privileged music and musical contexts which had not yet moved into Turino's category of presentational or high fidelity context. What are the consequences for this image of rural people? It means that there is also a construction of rural people as being tied to a rural, unsophisticated lifestyle and mindset, of essentially becoming the "folk." This is not limited to the rural peoples of Newfoundland but it is one result of focusing on rural communities and particularly isolated ones. This approach did highlight localized cultures that were otherwise hidden to Canadians and the majority of other Newfoundlanders. Ryan's *Fancy* also did a few urban shows in their Atlantic Series (eg. Halifax).

The fieldwork techniques allowed them to capture some wonderful moments and events of Newfoundland culture which they would not have with a larger crew. Yet Kellum still feels years later that there was an invisible wall while the camera was rolling



– a wall he felt he was never able to completely penetrate. In South East Bight, PB, their first sojourn into using the documentary process for the show, Kellum described how the real party started after the cameras were turned off. Placentia Bay was a natural place to begin this process as Wareham was the son of a merchant in Harbour Buffett, PB and Pittman and Byrne were also from the region (Rosenberg, pers. comm. 2011). I quote Kellum at length regarding this important experience for him:

*Jack Kellum:* The first year...we brought the guests into the studio and we noticed that they were very uncomfortable in that studio environment. So... we modified our approach and said ‘why don’t we go to the guests?’....It was a sound philosophy to surround them with as much familiarity as was possible, except that you’re still using cameras and you’re still using microphones, so...there is an alienation that takes place immediately, but being in their own environment lessens this immediately.

One of the first places we went when we started taking it out of the studio was South East Bight. South East Bight [was] a settlement in Placentia Bay that refused to resettle. The die-hards just hung on, even though all of their facilities were removed. [Singer] Anita Best is from South East Bight....The reason that we went there was...because these were tenacious people that hung on, even though everything was stacked against them. We planned a party in the school house... We went there...we did our filming...the whole village was invited and everybody came. Wilf Wareham did his doctoral thesis<sup>233</sup> on Mack Masters... Mack Masters was a sailing skipper that used to sail...Wareham boats from Harbour Buffett to Spain and Portugal and take salt fish everywhere... He was a great old man....We were able to film Ryan’s Fancy having a jam session in this school hall and we were able to get Mack Masters singing a wonderful version of “Lovely Nancy”<sup>234</sup> and a local guy playing fiddle too....This was one of the first shows that we did on location and I was very, very happy with the way it went down and what we got. Would you believe that as soon as the lights went out the real party began?

*Evelyn Osborne:* I have no trouble believing that!

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<sup>233</sup> (See Wareham 1982)

<sup>234</sup> The song to which he is referring is “Jackie Tar” also known as “Jolly Jack.”

*Jack Kellum*: I think we came as close as we could to getting the real thing... that's when the real party began and it was an incredible party....Remember that I'm not a Newfoundlander and I'd never been in a situation like this... The women and the kids all curled up around the side of the room, the kids were lying on coats<sup>235</sup>... The men all gathered in a circle on chairs and started singing and started passing songs, one to the next to the next, and around and around the circle it went... [I'm] from southern Ontario, and I'm sitting in this circle too, and there's this big guy sitting next to me with hands that could crush an oak tree is holding my hand<sup>236</sup>... Men holding hands was not part of my bringing up or my social sphere that I moved in. It was just an incredible experience for me and for everyone there...but we couldn't capture that.

A similar thing happened over in the Codroy Valley where we staged a milling frock and although it worked on television and I was happy with it...the real milling frolic took place after the lights were shut down the camera put away. I was never able to get beyond [the camera wall] but I can tell you one thing, with our small unobtrusive crew of maybe three people, we got in a lot farther than... if we'd had a mobile and four or five cameras and a crew of twenty people.

Far from being a show simply about Irish musicians, the *Ryan's Fancy* show attempted to bring small outpost culture to a mass audience through television.

Although it was difficult to capture the intimacy of off-camera moments in the show, Denis Ryan thought the medium of television was more intimate than a concert hall. Similar to the small groups gathered for early radio, Ryan felt that through television they were "personally performing to these few people inside their own living room" (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). To Ryan, television represented an interaction with a collective of small groups. While the interaction could be seen as one-way, families and friends might then discuss amongst themselves. Narváez and Laba give examples of people interacting with mass media and using it as a starting point for

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<sup>235</sup> This was not unique to Placentia Bay. My mother remembers similar experiences from her childhood in Bonavista Bay (Osborne pers. comm.).

<sup>236</sup> The custom of holding another man's hand in Placentia Bay while singing is explained by Wareham in his study of party traditions (1982, 184-185, 270).

conversations (1986, 4-5). In this way, the television can move from a mass communication to interactions in small groups which can provide occasions for folklore transmission.

Unlike concerts which are considered to be primarily sound first and visual impact second, television depends on visual images first and foremost. Ryan thought a lot about the visual impact of the shows and how best to convey the images through music:

Now if we're doing a show on the Bonavista Line for example, I don't want to be [just] singing "freight train, freight train going so fast." It'd be a lot nicer if [the audience] can get pictures [which] will tell a big story too. You're taking people out into Bonavista, [and] they'll come along [on] the train with you, so the Bonavista line is going to mean something to the people. (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591)

While the television shows allowed for longer and more serious ballads than club venues there was still a limit put on how long a song could be. For example the group was required to leave out verses of the logging ballad "Peter Emberley" as the medium of television cannot hold the attention of the audience as long as an in-person performance (ibid.). When I asked Kellum about how he dealt with long songs he replied:

Unfortunately, what you have to do is edit...and hopefully not to lose too much in the editing...you'd run the risk of criticism from the folklorists or the purists but perhaps 500,000 more people would see it. (2010)

Due to this limitation the crew developed methods of presentation that did not focus solely on the singer. For example, they spliced in pictures of the landscape or people related to the song. This technique helped to construct the song as "belonging" to a certain place in the audience's mind. Adding local landscape, particularly rural

landscapes and pictures of people doing traditional activities such as fishing or step-dancing equated this music strongly with a rural outport culture.

#### ***6.9.1 Show Analysis of “Wooden Ships and Iron Men”***

In this section I take the reader through one show, “Wooden Ships and Iron Men,” (Kellum 1976b) with a critical eye towards choices made in filming, interviewing and repertoire selection which bring out a sense of place and culture. The show was set in Arnold’s Cove with singer and sailor Mack Masters recalling his days aboard wooden schooners. This show is slightly unusual in the series in its use of old film and photo stock to recapture the memories of the conditions and look of the old schooners. There is less landscape and fewer scenes of people in their daily lives than some other shows such as “Change in Change Islands” which showed people walking about the community, a little girl carrying water, and laundry on the clothesline (Kellum 1976a). I chose this show because of the song “The Jolly Jack Tar” which I will discuss below.

The opening credits strongly ground the *Ryan’s Fancy Show* in Atlantic Canada particularly in the rural and outdoor areas. The opening credits show them in a variety of outdoor rural scenes. The shots of communities include vernacular styled houses, snow covered roads, and boats. The trio are dressed casually, in a manner suitable to their generation, and they are carrying instruments which gives them a particular demographic appeal to younger audiences. At the same time these credits show that they have a particular interest in rural lifestyle and traditions, particularly music. The opening credits stress informality by introducing the group only by first, rather than full names. This approach instantly puts the audience on a first-name basis with the hosts of the show

suggesting they are not strangers, but friends, dropping by to play music in the homes of their guests.

The *Ryan's Fancy Show* opens and closes with bookend studio stage scenes showing a live studio audience. Ryan's Fancy begins the show by singing a theme-related song, then telling the audience where the show will transport the audience for that episode. The central portion of the show is in the field, after which it returns to studio for the conclusion.

The fieldwork portion of the show starts in the community with the members of Ryan's Fancy outdoors. Normally, there is an opening monologue by Denis Ryan about the history of the place followed by a song. In the episode I am examining, "Wooden Ships and Iron Men" the "boys" are aboard a beached banking schooner called *The Bruce*. In this case the opening monologue is spoken by Fergus O'Byrne:

The days are long gone when men from Newfoundland sailed to the fishing grounds in wooden vessels, or took their schooners loaded down with salt fish to distant ports across the sea. [looking up at masts] The *Bruce* here was a banking schooner in those days, and like most her of kind, she's lying high and dry now, perhaps never to sail again. Although most of the boats are gone, some of the men who sailed them are still around. [camera slowly zooming to a close-up on Fergus] Mack Masters is one of these men, and we've come here to Arnold's Cove, Placentia Bay, Newfoundland to spend some time with him. We're looking forward to hearing some of his songs and listening to him recall some of the experiences he had back in the days of Wooden Ships and Iron Men. (Kellum 1976b)

The beached ship and the idea of a time "long gone" sets up a nostalgic link to a past which represents a type of manhood linked to the sea which changed in recent times.

Mack Masters is presented as a tradition-bearer and someone who will connect the members of Ryan's Fancy, and the audience, to a time when men worked hard at a life on the sea.

The group's first song on location is aboard a long liner, the new version of the old banking schooner. They sing "Heave Away Me Jollies" and on the word "pilot" we see our first shot of Mack Masters at the helm of the boat.

The interviews are conducted by Denis Ryan and are unlike more recent television interviews for news or talk shows. Ryan turns away from the camera and towards the guest, giving all his attention to the interviewee rather than the audience. This style of interview focuses the audience attention almost solely on the informant and the importance of what he is conveying. The interview with Mack Masters takes place below deck. Masters and Ryan are sitting close together at a small table. Ryan begins by asking Masters if he became a man by becoming a sailor. The introduction by O'Byrne and this opening question tie sailing and masculinity together for the duration of the show. Masters replies that he *thought* he became a man when he was about thirteen years old and started making his own living on the water.<sup>237</sup> At the time, this meant that he no longer had to listen to his father. Masters goes on to explain his fatalistic view of death and that he and others did not take the dangers of the sea very seriously. Continuing, he stated that he and his colleagues saw their work exporting fish and importing goods as important for the economy and Newfoundlanders. This conversation is peppered with black and white still images of anonymous sailors aboard banking schooners. In this one aspect, this show differs from others with the use of archival footage rather than contemporary shots of life in the community.

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<sup>237</sup> The link between sailing and masculinity is also drawn by Wareham in his doctoral dissertation. Wareham provides a more extensive biography of Masters (1982, 135-140).

Ryan then turns the conversation to music. Ryan asks Masters about his views on the “old songs” and if he thinks the “young Newfoundland people are beginning to appreciate [them] again.” Masters replies that he feels that recording songs for posterity is important:

The day will come when they’ll be glad to have those songs and ...I hope that they’ll be there for them to get. That’s why I...sang my song for Wilfred [Wareham] and he taped them off. Several have asked me to sing a song...for them to tape...because I’d be very happy when I’m was gone if I thought that someone had my songs to use them and they’re singing them when I’m dead and gone. (ibid.)

Fergus O’Byrne gives a monologue while the television audience views shots of the long liner on the water and modern buildings in Arnold’s Cove. O’Byrne explains that Mack Masters grew up in Harbour Buffett but was resettled to the growth centre of Arnold’s Cove in the mid-1960s during the resettlement program. In this way, this particular episode also differs from others as it takes place in a larger town rather than a smaller rural outpost. The larger centre of Arnold’s Cove is not emphasized in the show. This is counteracted however by Masters’ childhood in a community now abandoned in favour of modernity.

Quite a few of the *Ryan’s Fancy* shows end the fieldwork section with a party scene in someone’s kitchen and this show is no different. O’Byrne presents this scene as a chance for Masters to hand on his songs to an interested younger generation. O’Byrne speaks over shots of a party atmosphere of the kitchen:

[through kitchen window, Mack sitting next to accordion player Baxter Wareham] When he’s not at sea you can usually find him at home singing a song or [Baxter playing with Fergus behind him] yarning with friends. [Mack is next to stove, Denis leaning on old style wood stove, smoking a pipe] Over the years he has commanded the respect of a number of younger people like [switch to Linda Slade with Fergus in back tapping hands actively on legs] Linda Slade and the

Wareham brothers who will drop by to say hello and perhaps learn an old song or recitation. [feet tapping] They might even teach Mack one that he hasn't heard. [Baxter playing] This exchange is his wish to leave something behind...[end of tune and clapping]

This kitchen party is one of mutual cross-generational musical exchange, the same sort of process which Ryan's Fancy is encouraging through this very show. Accordionist Baxter Wareham plays some tunes he learned from sailors, and Linda Slade sings a song she learned from her family. Mack Masters sings a song known as the "Jackie Tar."

The closing on-location scene shows the band on the beached *Bruce* schooner singing a whaling song. During the third verse, archival film of a whaling crew is shown to the viewer. Back in the studio they sing a song attributed to Placentia Bay called "The Ryans and the Pittmans" (ibid.). This song is originally an English tune which has been adopted to a local context. This connection between the English and Newfoundland version is highlighted on the 2011 *Shore to Shore* CD (Wren Trust et al. 2010).

The "Jolly Jack Tar," or "Lovely Nancy," was cited by Jack Kellum as the ultimate example of Ryan's Fancy's influence in helping to preserve Newfoundland music. Over the years Kellum and Ryan's Fancy taped at least three versions of Mack Masters singing this song (Kellum 2010). Subsequently, Ryan's Fancy recorded it on one of their albums. The St. John's musical group, The Punters, recorded it again seventeen years later (1998). Kellum feels that Ryan's Fancy acted as a bridge by making older traditions accessible to younger generations. In order to test this theory I give a short comparison of these three versions.

Mack Masters performed the song in the traditional *a cappella* style. His performance style was sitting straight up in a chair gesturing with his hands, swaying his



body and tapping his feet. Both Ryan's Fancy and The Punters keep the words very close to Masters' version. The overall feel of the song with its slight syncopations is maintained through all three versions.

Ryan's Fancy added light accompanying instruments including mandolin, guitar, banjo and some tin whistle. They paid tribute to Masters' *a capella* performance by singing the fifth verse and the final line unaccompanied. Ryan's Fancy restricted their instrumental sections to the beginning and the end of the song rather than inserting them in the middle. They also kept some of the unusual structures with 9 beats on three of the four lines of each verse plus one beat between lines. The Punters' picked a more up-beat tempo and changed the beat structure to the standard of 8 beats per vocal line. They do allow one beat to separate verses. The Punters also inserted two instrumental solos after verses 3 and 6.

These three versions were learned and performed in different circumstances. Presumably, Masters learned it within his community context, whereas Ryan's Fancy learned it in a revival type situation where they went out of their way to seek out tradition bearers and reinterpret the song for a recording medium and audience. The Punters in turn, learned from that recording and simply provided their own arrangement and interpretation. Through recording this song, Ryan's Fancy and other musicians who have done the same type of research, worked to extend the tradition into a modern context for listening on recordings. This moves this song along Thomas Turino's cultural continuum from a participatory event to high fidelity. This change of performance context also transports the song from a rural to an urban context.

### ***6.10 Beyond Ryan's Fancy***

In 1982, Ryan's Fancy decided to split up. They planned their own departure for a year. It culminated in a farewell concert at Dalhousie University in Halifax in June 1983 (Small 1983, 18). At that concert they were joined by singer John Allan Cameron and fiddle player Jerry Holland (ibid.). O'Byrne explained that they decided to part ways when they figured they were never going to move beyond what they already were. They felt they had reached their potential as a group, so it was time to move on with their lives:

Towards the early eighties we started thinking...we could continue to do the club scene and this and that and the other thing, but I think we were all getting tired of being on the road....It didn't seem at the time that the band [was] going to develop, expand into any more than what we were, [which was] a folk band singing Irish and Newfoundland songs....It was...a mutual agreement and we planned it...a year and a half in advance to...do a final tour and...we went our separate ways. (2010)

In 2004 the group received the East Coast Music Awards (ECMA) Lifetime Achievement Award (Goodard 2004, July, 12-13; Kelly 2004, 42-45; S. MacDonald 2004, 3). They sang together one verse and chorus when they accepted the award, much to the delight of the crowd:

Initially we were saying, 'no we're not going to sing, we're only going to accept the award' and that was it. Then I proposed to the guys, that people are going to expect us to do something...so I proposed look let's go out, accept the award...dedicate it to the fans, [and] sing a verse and a chorus of a song....It worked out well...it was just a big surprise...and everybody appreciated it. (O'Byrne 2010)

Sadly, on February 17, 2007 Dermot O'Reilly passed away suddenly from a heart attack (Gillingham and Baker 2007, A1). The St. John's music community was shocked and there was an outpouring of grief with many concert tributes and articles written in

celebration of O'Reilly's life and contribution to Newfoundland music.<sup>238</sup> In the spring of 2011 the first Dermot O'Reilly Legacy Award was offered to Memorial University student, Aaron Collis, a member of the traditional session band The Dardenelles, for leadership in the area of Newfoundland traditional music (Harron 2011, np).

In the spring of 2011, a tribute album *What a Time! A Forty Year Celebration* which features re-releases of forty-two songs (Ryan's Fancy 2011). The album was well received. The review in the Newfoundland Herald ecstatically stated that, "The release of *What a Time* on CD is a monumental achievement for the legacy of Ryan's Fancy, a newer showcase of the finest traditional music this province has ever experienced" (Kelly 2011, 21-22).<sup>239</sup> In the summer of 2011 Fergus O'Byrne received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Society and the last set of the provincial folk festival was a tribute to Ryan's Fancy. The stage filled with many musicians who joined O'Byrne in a variety of Newfoundland, Irish, Cape Breton and Dermot O'Reilly songs.<sup>240</sup> During this performance it was clear that Ryan's Fancy has become very much a part of Newfoundland music.

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<sup>238</sup> For a sample of commemorative articles, please see (Bartlett 2007, A1-A2; Canadian Press 2007, A5; Dooley 2007, B4; Howard 2008, 15; Kelly 2007, 16-19; M. Martin 2007, 43-44; Measure 2007, 2; Porter 2007, 11)

<sup>239</sup> For more reviews please consult the official Ryan's Fancy website (Lockyer 2011, np).

<sup>240</sup> The set list as I was able to write it down included "West Country Lady" by Dermot O'Reilly; "Tie Me Down" by Allistair McGillivray; "Rakes of Kildare"; "All in a Summer's Day"; "I'm Drunk Today and I'm Seldom Sober"; a set of Cape Breton Tunes; "Candle through a glass of wine"; "Rocky Road to Dublin" and "Fellar from Fortune." This is an eclectic set list which includes original songs, instrumentals, Irish, Atlantic Canadian and Newfoundland songs.

## 6.11 Conclusions

There is no doubt that Newfoundlanders and Canadians watched the *Ryan's Fancy* show. With only two national television networks at the time the audience percentile was high. Denis Ryan suggests that their show validated local Newfoundland music for Newfoundlanders.<sup>241</sup> This view is both debated and celebrated by today's musicians. As Bob Hallett of Great Big Sea stated:

I do not subscribe to the belief that three Irishmen recording local songs made them any better – any worthier – than they were before. However, that is effectively what happened. And while it says a lot of sad things about Newfoundlander's self-esteem (or lack thereof), the end more than justified the means...Ryan's Fancy grabbed Newfoundland music from its box in the back of the closet, where it lay almost forgotten, polished it and dressed it up, and by their inspired example made the rest of us realize how good it really was. And for that I am grateful. (2010, 32)

The rhetoric of Irish groups, particularly Ryan's Fancy, discovering, revitalizing and/or reintroducing Newfoundland music to Newfoundlanders is a recurring theme in interviews and newspaper articles. Hallett's statement also references the sense of loss (discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.5) which is so often equated with Newfoundland's culture and sense of place. The loss of cultural confidence theory supports the assertion that Newfoundlanders needed help from outside to recognize and validate their own expressive culture. Kellum describes the influence of Ryan's Fancy on Newfoundland music as being two-fold. First, he describes Newfoundland music as being "in the closet" in the early 1970s when the travelling Irish (Ryan's Fancy, Sullivan's Gypsies, Sons of Erin, Clancy Brothers and other show bands) toured Newfoundland (2010). When Ryan's Fancy started playing to their university student peer group, the audience heard

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<sup>241</sup> A similar claim was made by Ray Walsh's regarding *All Around the Circle* discussed in section 4.4.5.

the music of their parents put into an acceptable format and the music came “out of the closet” (ibid.). Secondly, Kellum thinks the most perfectly “encapsulated” example of Ryan’s Fancy’s influence is the example of Mack Master’s *a capella* version of “Lovely Nancy,” or “Jacky Tar” discussed in this chapter (ibid.). Using this song as an example Kellum believes that a new generation of Newfoundlanders discovered their own music through Ryan’s Fancy’s preservation efforts and “finessing” of the material for a wider audience (ibid.).

While I believe there is some truth to the assertion that Ryan’s Fancy did highlight Newfoundland culture, it is not the entire story. The risk of this storyline is the idea that traditional music had had no commercial exposure prior to its discovery by Ryan’s Fancy. This story gives the impression that Ryan’s Fancy found Newfoundland music isolated away from the world in fishing villages. It suggests that Newfoundlanders needed outside help to modernize their music. As clearly shown throughout this dissertation this was certainly not the case. Although the Newfoundland recording and television industry was not as robust as in larger off-island centres there were multiple musicians working in radio, television and recordings at this time. That said, the *Ryan’s Fancy* show was unique in its fieldwork and interview approach and did allow audiences (local, national, international) to see localized traditions for small rural outports which might not otherwise have been televised. I am not suggesting that Ryan’s Fancy does not deserve the high praise it receives; undoubtedly they did do a lot to promote traditional musics in Atlantic Canada. As Robert Buck stated at the press conference announcing their ECMA lifetime achievement award:

Ryan's Fancy has been a bridge connecting generations, musical styles and cultures. They have given the region a rich musical contribution and have created in the process a deserved legacy. They adopted the culture they found here, reveled [*sic*] in it and took an active role in uncovering the rich tapestry of poems and music created by the people of Atlantic Canada. (quoted in Kelly 2004, 44)

Certainly, the generation of Newfoundland musicians who are now recording albums are looking back to their childhood for inspiration and coming up with a lot of Ryan's Fancy repertoire. As multi-instrumentalist Jason Whelan explained, Ryan's Fancy had been a big influence on him as a child. He related that, "I'd been to see them... We had all the Ryan's Fancy records, I'd even met Dermot and these people when I was really young... but it was years later that I actually started playing the music" (Sutton et al. 2008). O'Byrne's and O'Reilly's continued engagement with the community have also kept Ryan's Fancy in the minds of musicians. Arguably Ryan's Fancy arrived just at the start of the Newfoundland folk revival and played a large part in it. I believe that the credit for stimulating the folk revival of the 1970s should be shared amongst several other contemporary musical and theatre groups including the Sons of Erin and Figgy Duff. The *Ryan's Fancy Show* was not made in isolation. As discussed by Adams, television and culture share "reciprocal relations" by affecting each other, rather than simply one following the other. Rosenberg has suggested that Ryan's Fancy's audience was comprised of the cultural and intellectual elite of St. John's. Certainly the *Ryan's Fancy Show* on CBC was in line with the contemporary thinking which had been constructing the outpost Newfoundland as the "true" seat of Newfoundland expressive culture.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> This was discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

The McNultys were important because of their longstanding presence in the soundscape of Newfoundland radio. Ryan's Fancy made an impact as their transnational Irish repertoire came to the forefront just as the McNultys were disappearing. In their recordings and performances they sang Newfoundland songs alongside their internationally accepted Irish pieces. Their television show focused more on the local rural culture of Newfoundland than on Irish music. Ryan's Fancy was not simply another Irish group touring through the province. They became active participants in the local musical community. They adopted the St. John's area as their new home and were mutually adopted into the local scene. Their continued presence, particularly O'Byrne and O'Reilly, meant they were part of the local scene over decades and colleagues with their own generation and the next generation of Newfoundland musicians. This continued personal contact was vital to their continued acceptance as Newfoundlanders. Ryan's Fancy's wider success outside the province gave their music, and the local musicians they promoted credibility. Newfoundlanders saw themselves on-screen with musicians who were not only successful, but chose to live here and promote their adopted local culture. Whereas contemporary television in general tended towards promoting white collar urbanites (Fiske and Hartley 1993, 8-21), Ryan's Fancy made a point of going against that grain of mainstream television.

While the members of the band personally felt a similar sense of place in Newfoundland as in Ireland, they did not explicitly try to construct Newfoundland as inherently Irish in their shows.<sup>243</sup> Yet, I surmise that their popularity as Irish-

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<sup>243</sup> They did however, note Irish ancestry and history when they came across it. One example is the episode "The Irish Immigrants" in which they visited the community of Branch in St. Mary's Bay (Kellum 1977a).

Newfoundland musicians has confused the issue in the minds of many people. Here were Irishmen highlighting Newfoundland culture, and singing a selection of Irish, Scottish, English and Newfoundland songs. As shown in Chapter Seven and discussed in this chapter, many listeners do not distinguish between origins of songs and classify music by instrumental arrangement and their causal observations as to origin based on the group performing.<sup>244</sup> As O'Byrne has pointed out, much of their repertoire has been co-opted into the category of Irish-Newfoundland music, so their entire repertoire, regardless of origins, was considered Irish and later Irish-Newfoundland. I would suggest that this is partially due to being Irish themselves and also the instrumentation of the group being similar to the internationally popular Clancy Brothers and Dubliners.

The *Ryan's Fancy Show* contributed to the musical senses of place of Newfoundlanders in a number of ways. On the one hand, the members were all Irish-born and adopted Newfoundland as their own from a personal shared sense of place. They became Newfoundland's unofficial musical ambassadors of Newfoundland through their performances for Prime Minister Trudeau and their national television series. This may have cast Newfoundland music as essentially Irish in the minds of Canadians, especially as, in my experience, an untrained ear cannot tell the difference between an Irish and a St. John's accent.<sup>245</sup> Ryan's Fancy also helped to connect Newfoundland musical traditions to the wider international folk revival through their residency here, their recordings and their personal interactions with musicians such as Tommy Makem

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<sup>244</sup> The Celtic music literature review and discussion in Chapter Four also touches on the issue of whitewashing musical origins.

<sup>245</sup> This is not to say that there is only one Irish accent. Both islands boast a wide array of linguistic variety which is difficult for those not immersed in them to distinguish.



and other to-be-famous musical groups such as the Bothy Band and Chieftains. Intentionally, or not, their Irish revival activities, their nationality and the instrumentation worked together to construct the Newfoundland music they played as being Irish based. On the other hand, the television shows strived to promote Newfoundland expressive culture in its own milieus. The shows did seek to create pride in rural traditions which had been maligned over the previous few decades since Confederation. Ryan's Fancy is an important and complex group to comprehend in relation to the construction of musical senses of place for Newfoundland. Their recordings and early television shows connected Newfoundland musics to the urban revival; while their later television shows linked the music to its local, rural and historical roots.

**Chapter Seven:**  
**Crossing Over:**  
***Irish Fiddler Séamus Creagh and Island to Island Connections***<sup>246</sup>

***7.1 Introduction***

This chapter looks at connections between St. John's, Newfoundland and Cork, Ireland from 1988 to 2011. It examines a generation of musicians, now in their thirties and forties, who did not grow up with the older community dance traditions of Newfoundland. Instead they often found Newfoundland music through recordings of Irish music owned by their parents. Prominent in these recordings were those of Ryan's Fancy and other 1970s Irish musical groups. During the 1990s international Celtic revival these musicians also listened to a great number of widely available recordings of Irish musicians. Several musicians in this age group have travelled or lived in Ireland. This chapter explores the interactions between Newfoundland musicians and Irish fiddle player Séamus Creagh,<sup>247</sup> who lived in St. John's from 1988-1993, and to a lesser extent Irish flute player Rob Murphy. I also investigate the influence of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the governments of Newfoundland and Ireland in the late 1990s and how that document has enhanced exchanges between the islands. The chapter finishes with an examination of the *Island to Island* recording project. This CD featured musicians from St. John's and Cork. I investigate how such a project situates

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<sup>246</sup> Part of this chapter was presented at the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo2008) and published in their third volume of fiddle and dance studies (Osborne 2010a).

<sup>247</sup> Sadly, Séamus Creagh passed away in Cork, Ireland on March 15, 2009 during the writing of this chapter (Irish Times 2009, np).

Newfoundland instrumental music in relation to Irish music and the constructions of musical place which arise from such an endeavour. The *Island to Island* project serves as a case study to investigate how relationships between instrumentalists in St. John's and Ireland have formed and continue to flourish into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This chapter is a departure from the earlier case studies. The McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy worked primarily in song and this study focuses exclusively on instrumental music. There was a shift in the 1990s, stemming from instrumental bands such as the Bothy Band and DeDannan, which cast Irish music as instrumental as well as song based. It is important to note that instrumental musicians' musical senses of place are influenced by both song and instrumental music.

As in the previous chapter, I acknowledge Irish emigrés who had a deep impact on the Newfoundland scene. Unlike the two previous case studies, however, this chapter focuses more on Newfoundland musicians and how they are negotiating their own musical constructions of place in relation to Ireland and Irish musicians. These musicians have a well-developed sense of "multilocality" for Newfoundland music; they frequently note both similarities and differences between Newfoundland and Irish music. They recognize the importance of Irish music on the world stage, particularly in the recording world, but also acknowledge that Newfoundland music is unique in its own right. They also recognize that Ireland is one of the best avenues to promote themselves as Newfoundland musicians.

### ***7.1.1 Memorandum of Understanding***

In 1996, the governments of Newfoundland and Ireland signed a MOU to recognize the historical connections between the two islands and to facilitate new endeavours. Signed between Taoiseach John Bruton and Premier Brian Tobin in 1996, it was reaffirmed in 1999 and then re-signed by Premier Danny Williams and Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in 2004 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2004, np; Ireland Newfoundland Partnership 2009a, np). The assistant director of the Ireland-Newfoundland Partnership (INP) in 2008 was Kristy Clarke. Clarke explained that the basis of the MOU goes back to the 1970s when Bruton visited Newfoundland and realized the significance of the island's historical connections to Ireland. Bruton returned to Newfoundland in 1997 to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cabot's voyage. At this time he met Premier Brian Tobin and they started the process for the MOU which was signed the following year (Clarke 2008; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 1997, np). Clarke explained that Bruton wanted to "give some recognition to Newfoundland because...he was just so struck by how Irish it was" (2008).

In order to administrate the MOU the Ireland-Newfoundland Partnership (INP) in Dublin, and the Ireland Business Partnerships (IBP) in St. John's, were formed in 2001 and 1999 respectively. Their mandate was to promote exchanges in business, culture and education (ibid.). According to Clarke, by 2008, over 200 projects had been funded. This document supports a unique connection between Newfoundland and the Irish government as MOUs are usually signed with other national, rather than provincial,

governments (Clarke 2008; Lalor 2009, 26).<sup>248</sup> In part due to the MOU, collaborative projects between Irish and Newfoundland musicians and artists have become more common in the past ten years. Many of these exchanges, such as the Festival of the Sea, have focused on the historical link between Waterford and St. John's which were paired as sister cities. The *Island to Island* project, however, which I discuss below, was a cultural exchange program funded by the INP that focused on connecting musicians in St. John's and Cork.

By 2010, more than seventy of the projects funded by the INP were arts and culture related (Ireland Newfoundland Partnership 2010, np). These endeavours included music, film, radio, theatre art and archival work. The first project in 1999 helped fund the televised mini-series *Random Passage* based on Bernice Morgan's novel of the same name (Morgan 1992; J. Smith, 2002). INP has also helped digitize material housed in the Irish Music Traditional Archives in Dublin and Memorial University of Newfoundland's Folklore and Language Archives (MUNFLA). The most recent large-scale project is known as *The Fishing Ground*, a ten-year exhibit in the provincial museum, The Rooms, in St. John's (J. Mannion 2009). This exhibit opened in the fall of 2009, and illustrates the historical connections between Newfoundland and Ireland. Another large scale project funded by the INP is the "Festival of the Sea" held each year alternating venues between the Southern Shore in Newfoundland and in the Southwest of Ireland.

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<sup>248</sup>Newfoundland signed another such agreement with Iceland, in April 2008 (Lalor 2009, 26). The ability of the provincial government to sign international agreements with other North Atlantic island nations may have been behind Premier Danny Williams' bold announcement that instead of participating in Canada's negotiations with the European Union he would forge his own treaties with the EU (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 2008, np).

The “Festival of the Sea” started in 2004 when Ray McGraw came to Newfoundland from southwest Ireland to design a festival that would alternate between the two regions. Initially he called it Sea Week but it was later changed to Festival of the Sea. In 2005 and 2007 the Festival of the Sea was held in Ireland’s southwest regions of Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny. In 2006, it was held on the southern Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland in the regions called the Irish Loop and the Cape Shore which extend along the Southern Shore and over to Placentia Bay. In 2008, the festival returned to Newfoundland in the form of planning meetings to reassess how the festival could be run more efficiently. In September 2009 and 2011, the festival was again held on the Southern Shore.

Business, rural development and cultural activities are all important elements of the festival. Conferences and concerts enable the visiting participants and guests a chance to explore, meet and connect with people in the hosting region. It is interesting to note that in the following explanation Clarke references the shared experience of living near the ocean rather than historical and genetic links:

The idea was to bring the southeast [of Ireland] and the Southern Shore to[gether] to share their experiences. Given that we are both coastal areas, it was thought that they should call it the Festival of the Sea so that they could share their experiences living with the sea and the different coastal elements that derive from living by the sea. It was a festival [to] bring together the Irish and Newfoundland[ers] so there would’ve been cultural elements... like music performances.... There would be two or three or four conferences around rural development, or fisheries, or history or genealogies.... That sort of knowledge sharing element and they also do billeting... so that Irish families are staying with Newfoundland families.... [There is a] whole other level of exchange that happens when you are sitting around someone’s kitchen having a cup of tea with them. (2008)

The number of artistic and cultural exchanges in the last few years has brought the historical relationship with Ireland to the forefront of the public mind and added to the sense of cultural identification with Ireland.

The language and assertions of the strong “intrinsic connection” between Newfoundland and Ireland stated in the MOU has been critically examined by anthropologist Joshua Lalor. Lalor points out that the INP and IBP have sought to naturalize the connection by linking Newfoundland, not only historically and culturally, but through genetics and geology (2009, 36-37). In other words, the MOU’s arm’s length agencies, the INP and BNP, are actively working to create a common sense of place in the minds of Irish and Newfoundland people. The INP and IBP have an active mandate to promote ties directly between Ireland and Newfoundland.

## ***7.2 Irish Musicians in Newfoundland***

Considering all of the connections between Newfoundland and Ireland, one might assume that the *Island to Island* project is based upon the recognition of a rich historical connection between the two islands. I would assert that, while the historical connections play a part, the practical sources of this CD date back a mere twenty-four years when Séamus Creagh came to live in St. John’s. Since the 1980s there has been a strong connection to the Cork region due to a few musicians who lived in Newfoundland and maintained ties upon their return to Ireland. The culmination of this was a CD project titled *Island to Island: Traditional Music from Newfoundland and Ireland* which was produced by Séamus Creagh and Marie-Annick Desplanques with additional Irish

musicians Aidan Coffey and Mick Daly. The Newfoundland musicians were Colin Carrigan, Graham Wells, Billy Sutton, Jason Whelan and Paddy Mackey.

### **7.2.1 Séamus Creagh**

Irish fiddler Séamus Creagh came to Newfoundland on tour in 1988 and then returned shortly thereafter to live in St. John's for 5 years until 1993.<sup>249</sup> While living in Newfoundland, Creagh played with well-known band Tickle Harbour and recorded *Came the Dawn* (1994), a solo album, on which he included two tunes composed by Emile Benoit. The title of the CD was inspired by an all-night house music session in Carbonear with Gerry Strong (Creagh et al. 2007). Creagh played music in St. John's and travelled the island for festivals until he returned to Ireland in 1993. According to the liner notes of *Island to Island* he taught several musicians in St. John's and was a session musician on at least seven recordings (Creagh and Desplanques 2003). These recordings include two Tickle Harbour releases *Battery Included* (1998) and *The Brule Boys in Paris* (1991). Other recordings included *Parameters* (Lake 1991), and *The Spell is Cast* (Siren's Whisper 1992), as well as *Close to the Floor* (K. Russell 1992). Creagh's music career in Ireland was distinguished. He recorded with several of the great Irish musicians, including Jackie Daly (1995), Kevin Burke (1980) and flutist Hammy

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<sup>249</sup> In Newfoundland he met folklorist Marie-Annick Desplanques. She was instrumental in putting together the *Island to Island* project. In 1988 she had already been living in Newfoundland for six years teaching French and studying in the Folklore Department at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Dr. Desplanques is now on faculty at the University College Cork. Please see the University webpage (University College Cork 2012, np). Desplanques and Creagh married while in Newfoundland.



Hamilton (ca. 2002).<sup>250</sup> One of Creagh's last projects was to complete a double CD fiddle method called *Tunes for Practice* (2009). This recording includes thirty-eight tunes played slowly for learning purposes. In 2010, Graham Wells started an annual Feile Séamus Creagh in St. John's to honour Creagh and strengthen the connections between Newfoundland and Irish musicians (Feile Séamus Creagh 2011, np). In September 2011 there was a tribute night to Creagh at the Cork Folk Festival to which Newfoundland musicians Graham Wells and Billy Sutton were invited (Beamish Cork Folk Festival 2010, np).

The musical exchanges between Cork and St. John's have been significant. In a presentation at the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention (NAFCo2008), Desplanques outlined the many concerts she and Creagh had facilitated, on both sides of the Atlantic, involving Newfoundland and Ireland musicians.<sup>251</sup> Desplanques showed clippings of fiddler Christina Smith and Creagh playing together in Cork in 1991 as well as photos of the *Island to Island* musicians performing in Ireland just a few months prior to the talk (2008). This 2008 performance was the first time the Newfoundland musicians of the *Island to Island* CD travelled to Ireland as a group. The purpose of the trip to Ireland was not to promote *Island to Island* but to support Graham Wells' solo album (2008b). It is clear that the personal contacts between Cork and St. John's are the primary reason for maintaining musical exchanges rather than a sense of past historical connections.

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<sup>250</sup> Through Rob Murphy, Hammy Hamilton has also made connections with St. John's musicians Rob Brown and Michelle Murphy. With their help Hamilton has travelled several times to St. John's to give lectures, concerts and train Michelle as a flute maker.

<sup>251</sup> She showed pictures and posters of the events. Desplanques also discussed the visits by uilleann pipers Paddy Keenan and Paddy Moloney to Newfoundland. Newfoundland musicians also played concerts in Cork.

### 7.2.2 Rob Murphy<sup>252</sup>

Irish flutist, Rob Murphy from Cavan came to Newfoundland as a doctor in the early 1980s and stayed for about 15 years. He worked primarily in Grand Bank on the Burin Peninsula. Gerry Strong, another traditional musician and medical technologist based in Carbonear explained that there was a period of time in which many Irish were attracted to Newfoundland for work but many returned to Ireland again in the 1990s when Ireland's economy started to grow (2009). Rob Murphy was particularly influential in prompting the session scene in St. John's. He also played in the Newfoundland band Tickle Harbour. Despite the very brief biographical information here, Rob Murphy was very influential for many musicians in the St. John's and Avalon folk music scene.

With Murphy's encouragement, Rob Brown and Michelle Brophy started a branch of *Ceoltas*, or CCE, in St. John's.<sup>253</sup> Brown said that the main reason they started the branch was so they could be on the concert circuit (Brophy and Brown 2008). Every few years Irish musicians from that year's *Fleadh* tour worldwide to *Ceoltas* branches and play a concert. In their first year they had quite a few members, almost as many as the St. John's Folk Arts Council, and they produced two concerts. The branch dissolved only a few years after its inception (ibid.).

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<sup>252</sup> I was unable to contact Rob Murphy. This biographical information has been gleaned from musicians I have spoken to in Newfoundland.

<sup>253</sup> An explanation of *Ceoltas*, or CCE, was given in Chapter Four, section 4.5.3. The St. John's branch did not follow all of the *Ceoltas* rules. These rules dictate that they greet each other in Irish, promote dance or Irish language and have fundraisers with the proceeds going to *Ceoltas* in Ireland. These aspects of the organization did not resonate with the organizers or members of the St. John's branch.

### ***7.3 Irish Recorded Music and the Post-Dance Generation of Newfoundland Musicians***

In the 1990s, when Irish music was again gaining international recognition, many younger Newfoundland musicians turned to Irish recordings to fill in the gaps in their own Newfoundland recording material. During the 1970s and 1980s the recording industry in Newfoundland was, and still is, comparatively small relative to Ireland. As discussed throughout this dissertation, Newfoundland instrumental music began to be arranged for a listening, rather than dancing audience, in the late 1960s and 1970s. As noted below, some musicians feel it was not until the 1990s and 2000s that there were consistent and interesting accompaniments composed for Newfoundland instrumental dance music. Irish music made a similar transition in the 1950s and 1960s. They maintained the idea of dance-ability while also promoting virtuosity and intricate accompaniment. This transition is part of what Turino (2008) identifies as the switch to presentational and high fidelity music from participatory dance music. Irish music represented a larger world to young Newfoundland musicians of the 1980s and 1990s appealing at a time when Newfoundland was economically depressed. For them Ireland represented a richer and more respectable tradition which had been validated by international standards and media. To connect Irish music to Newfoundland music arguably elevated its stature. This section examines the musical journeys of a handful of these musicians. It follows how they came to play and respect Newfoundland music by first learning Irish music. In this way, Irish music is very much at the centre of their experience of Newfoundland music.

Bouzouki player and multi-instrumentalist Jason Whelan was influenced by his father's musical choices. His father had a large record collection and was a "huge fan" of the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem as well as Ryan's Fancy. Both Whelan and fiddler and multi-instrumentalist Billy Sutton who both recorded on *Island to Island* came to play traditional music in their late teens after playing rock and roll. Sutton, inspired by his father and grandfather, had taken up accordion when he was six but didn't really feel connected to the music until he was older. His family listened to shows which played Newfoundland music, such as Homebrew on OZ-FM radio, on weekend mornings. Although this show featured Newfoundland and Irish music, Sutton does not feel he was immersed in traditional music in his childhood. Sutton articulates a sentiment I've heard expressed by other musicians, and felt myself in the 1980s. Sutton stated:

I was always aware of it [traditional music], but never really cared about it. It wasn't the cool thing to do in the seventies. Newfoundland music, it was kind of embarrassing really. Nobody was into it; it was a thing that was dead. (Sutton et al. 2008)

That attitude towards traditional music changed in the late 1980s for Sutton and Whelan who now work as top traditional musicians in St. John's and abroad. Both Whelan and Sutton were inspired to play by the virtuosity they discovered when they listened to Irish instrumental music, or what Sutton called "High Gear Celtic Music." In reference to his father's records Whelan states:

I got [the records] and put them aside for a while and never really thought much of it. [I] put them on one day and was just blown away by a couple of De Dannon records...The De Dannon *Ballroom* was one. There was a Botanical Weaver album in the early eighties and it just blew me away. I was just fascinated by bouzoukis and this driving trad. music. Which was considerably different [from] the Makem and Clancy stuff, the balladry stuff I'd listened to, and I was into that

long before you'd even admit it or talk about it because none of your friends were into it (ibid.)

To Whelan, hearing music on record was an important part of self-education in Irish music.

What I loved about records...is that they had the pitch thing on it so you could speed up or slow down the record and you never had to tune to the record. So if you were playing along to records in your room you could...pitch up and down with the little pitch wheel and play in tune with the record...because standard pitch was always up and down on records depending on how they wanted to cut the length of the grooves...they were never in standard pitch...with a CD that's it, you don't have pitch control (ibid.)

Sutton began playing traditional music regularly when he discovered the mandolin, rather than the accordion. He described his music career from that point:

Everything just mushroomed from there, I started playing the tenor banjo and then I started playing the accordion a little bit and the bouzouki and this and that and then I started playing fiddle and I just found myself into it. (ibid.)

It is worth noting that the mandolin, tenor banjo and bouzouki were not played in Newfoundland music until the 1970s. These instruments are equated with Irish music ensembles. Newfoundland groups tended to feature accordion, guitar and drums.

Graham Wells, arguably one of the best accordion players currently in the scene, feels that his style is a “hybrid” blend of Newfoundland and Irish. The Irish accordion players Jackie Daly and Martin O'Connor in particular were influential on his development. Locally, accordionists Baxter Wareham and Frank Maher influenced him (2008a). Wells admits to being a magpie type musician, in that when he hears something he likes he learns and plays it. Wells was inspired to play accordion by his grandfather (ibid.). Once he showed an interest his father brought him to Frank Maher for lessons (Maher 2010; Wells 2008a). Although Wells was once described to me as someone who

thought Newfoundland tunes were Irish tunes gone wrong, he now identifies as a Newfoundland musician who plays both Irish and Newfoundland music. He feels that Newfoundland has more diversity than, say Cape Breton where the “borders are more clearly defined” (Wells 2008a). Wells sees no problem if some Newfoundland tunes are adapted from Irish tunes because he now recognizes that Newfoundland has its own music. He sees it this way: “the fact that there have been versions of tunes from other places for a long time is great and the fact that we have our own is equally good, you know, I don’t see a problem” (ibid.). Wells cites Guinchard and Benoit when talking about the differences and similarities between Irish and Newfoundland tunes. He states that:

Well there are certainly differences...the Emile tunes...there’s a different feel to some of them....The Rufus stuff there’s a big influence of *Sliabh Luachra* [and] a lot of his music, which is Cork and Kerry. I don’t think that he’s listed as having his roots from there but maybe some of the people who lived in his community... that he learned from [were] because there is an obvious connection between his music and the music of Cork and Kerry. All of his doubles, a lot of them had their roots directly in that region. You can find versions of them, unless Rufus put in an extra beat as he was willing to do for dances; or...there’s a C natural instead of a C-sharp in one part. They kind of transformed a bit after being on the west coast of Newfoundland for 300 years, or...400 years. It was bound to happen. There’s a regional dialect [in] them, there’s regional variations of the tunes, which [is] great, but that’s what happened right? (ibid.)<sup>254</sup>

Uilleann piper Rob Brown and flutist Michelle Brophy are prominent on the session scene in St. John’s. When I moved here in 2004, they hosted the biggest session in the city at O’Reilly’s Irish Newfoundland Pub. Now married, Brown and Brophy met partially due to Irish music in St. John’s. Brown learned guitar from his high school music teacher in Happy Adventure, BB and Brophy played flute in the school band in

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<sup>254</sup> Christina Smith spoke of the roots of Guinchard’s repertoire having similarities to *Sliabh Luachra* Kerry slides in her 2008 NAFCo paper (2008c).

Portugal Cove, CB. Neither feels that their childhood homes were filled with music and they did not know any performing musicians. Brophy stated:

There was no music in my family growing up, nobody understood it, nobody still understands it, so we had no connection to Newfoundland music. When I was in university I listened to Figgy Duff and...the Wonderful Grand Band (2008)

Though she felt that there was no music in her upbringing, she said that her parents listened to the Irish duo, Foster and Allen, and local radio on weekend mornings (ibid.).<sup>255</sup>

Brown discovered Newfoundland music mainly through Irish music. He read a friend's folklore paper in which Neil O'Grady, the uilleann piper maker from Carbonear, was interviewed. Brown then began listening to the Chieftains and became enthralled with the instrument. He and friends started going to Folk Night when it was held at Bridgett's Pub on Cookstown Road and were "really fascinated" watching Gerry Strong and Kelly Russell among others. Brophy had put away her school band silver flute for years until she met Brown and together they decided to start learning Irish music. They learned tunes and played at university mixers with Ontario flutist and whistle player John Bishop. For months in 1996, they attended sessions at the Duke of Duckworth but left their instruments in the car before they got up the nerve to play. At this time, they started listening to the Irish music of Altan and William Clancy. They travelled to Ireland so

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<sup>255</sup> Brophy's aunt was more specific in her listening tastes and introduced her to IRA rebel songs, which she remembers being broadcast on VOWR in the mornings (2008).

Brophy could look for a wooden flute and Brown could take uilleann pipe lessons at Willie Clancy week.<sup>256</sup>

Even though they learned many tunes from Irish recordings, both Brophy and Brown feel that they've now picked up a Newfoundland style which is quite different from, but related to, Irish music. Brophy stated:

We might learn it from music [notation], we might learn it from a CD...[and] when I'm playing along with something I *feel* like I'm playing it the way they're playing it, but when I go off on my own I'm playing it my way no matter what I do. (2008)

While Brown and Brophy became interested in Irish music through recordings it was the connections they made with traditional musicians in St. John's that kept them going. Brown acknowledges the importance of social connections in music by suggesting that if he had met different musicians he could be playing a lot of jazz or blues instead. Irish flutist Rob Murphy was a big influence on them while he lived in St. John's. Brophy approached him about lessons but instead of giving lessons he invited her to his house when a tunes session was happening. This response also highlights the importance of learning through social interaction rather than in formal lessons. Flutist Gerry Strong also became a good friend. Both Murphy and Strong were in the band, Tickle Harbour, discussed below. Brown and Brophy figured that they kept playing Irish music because their experiences with Irish musicians, including Rob Murphy and Hammy Hamilton

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<sup>256</sup> Started in 1973, just after uilleann piper William Clancy's death the summer school has developed into an international event with top teachers and performers and students from all over the world (Ó'hAllmhuráin 1998, 169). William Clancy week is held each summer in Milltown Mallby, Ireland (Lynch 2011, np).



were so positive. When their local friends began playing more Newfoundland tunes they followed suit.

Not everyone came to Newfoundland music through recordings. Colin Carrigan started playing fiddle when his mother signed him up for lessons with Kelly Russell (Carrigan 2001). Russell did not teach many students but he taught Carrigan, Pat Moran and Glenn Hiscock all of whom went onto become professional fiddlers. Carrigan has a slightly different viewpoint from some other musicians of his generation and scene.

Carrigan believes that:

Newfoundland has got a lot more English influence. The songs are largely English tradition and even the presentation of the music these days owes a lot to Figgy Duff sounding a lot like Fairport Convention or Steel Eye Span. It kind of explains Great Big Sea and the Irish Descendents. The so-called Irish songs, which are actually English, being played with bass and drums, that's an English sound, you don't hear a lot of. (2007)

While some musicians believe that instrumental music in Newfoundland is actually Irish in style and origin, Carrigan feels that there is something different about it. In his experience other musicians notice the difference as well:

I'm not really conscious of [the] history of a tune when I'm playing it, but that Rufus groove and the Emile tunes are killer. There is that Rufus groove I really like and it's the most distinctive. When you're playing the Rufus tunes, whether they may once have been Irish, [there's] that kind of drive and weird tunes. The crookedness of them...the quirkiness of the melodies is another characteristic and the speed and drive...That's when I feel like you're really representing the Newfoundland sound. When we played Celtic Colors<sup>257</sup> people really perk[ed] up, just because in the scope of all these Celtic, meta-Celtic, there's kind of a commonness that's hard to get away from if everyone is playing Irish tunes and the Newfoundland tunes do have a difference. (ibid.)

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<sup>257</sup> Celtic Colours is a music festival held in Cape Breton each October. For more information please see their website (Celtic Colours International Festival 1997-2011, np).

Carrigan also believes that there is room for both Newfoundland and Irish music in the tradition:

“Up the Southern Shore” is actually an Irish tune with Gaelic words, but I grew up not knowing that, and it’s a Newfoundland tune in my mind...People can get hung up on purity of culture or tradition, but it’s such a porous thing and it’s always been subject to incoming ideas...I think what’s important is to keep the Newfoundland humour<sup>258</sup> and the drive about the tunes. The actual melodies may change but we start communicating something...if someone grows up hearing this generation playing so-called Irish tunes at what point do we accept that we’ve assimilated that into our own tradition, in the same way Rufus and Emile would have? I don’t think they were consciously trying to preserve something, I think if they were playing the music they [were] exposed to and if they found a cool tune they would want to learn it. (ibid.)

This section has highlighted the musical journeys of several musicians who have played significant roles in the traditional music scene in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. I have emphasized the importance of Irish recordings and personal connections with Irish musicians as an interesting route for some of these musicians towards their discovery of Newfoundland music. At the same time that these musicians feel Newfoundland music is related to Irish music; they have also begun to differentiate and create a separate construction of Newfoundland music for themselves.

#### ***7.4 Experiences of Irish Music in Ireland***

Travelling to Ireland to visit, perform and/or live has been an important rite of passage for many musicians in the generation of players who are now performing Newfoundland and Irish music in St. John’s.<sup>259</sup> Newfoundland musicians have travelled to Ireland in the past, but the number of these trips has risen in the past 15 years

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<sup>258</sup> “Humouring” a tune refers to the feel and style in which the tune is performed.

<sup>259</sup> By suggesting this as a rite of passage I am not indicating there is any requirement to go to Ireland or that there is any stigma against those who do not go.

particularly since Séamus Creagh returned to Ireland in 1993. In this section I examine the commentary of young musicians who went to in Ireland including those of Jason Whelan, Daniel Payne,<sup>260</sup> Graham Wells,<sup>261</sup> Michelle Brophy, Rob Brown, Lindsay Ferguson,<sup>262</sup> and Greg Walsh. Interestingly, travel to Ireland seems to have the effect of both reaffirming and challenging some musicians' beliefs that Newfoundland music is essentially Irish music.

#### ***7.4.1 Newfoundland Musicians in Cork***

After returning to Ireland in 1993, Séamus Creagh and Marie-Annick Desplanques had regular visitors from Newfoundland. In 1994, Jason Whelan moved from St. John's to Dublin to pursue studies as a recording engineer. Whelan travelled to Cork on the weekends to play music with Creagh and friends. Whelan liked that there was a basic knowledge of Newfoundland in Cork which was lacking in Dublin. Around the year 2000, Daniel Payne decided that he wanted to pursue the arts as a livelihood. A summer with the Gros Morne Theatre Festival allowed him to save enough money to go

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<sup>260</sup> Daniel Payne decided to pursue a traditional music career after attending Mount Allison University for two years. He worked as dishwasher and waiter in Cork in order to play music there and travelled back and forth to Newfoundland approximately every three months (D. Payne 2007b).

<sup>261</sup> Graham Wells was part of an initiative to recruit Newfoundland youth to work in the Irish tourism industry in 2000. A number of young people, including several traditional musicians from St. John's, applied and were hired. Among those who were hired to work at a hotel in rural Connemara were Graham Wells, Angela Pickett and Lindsay Ferguson. The working conditions at the hotel were not as expected and many of the people hired left after a few weeks and found jobs elsewhere in the country. Wells found work in Galway as a hotel bartender. Angela Pickett left after a few weeks and went home to Newfoundland where she pursued a classical music career (2001). She is now finishing her DMA in viola at the Manhattan School of Music. None of the people I spoke to could recall the name of the program but the same or a similar initiative called the Irish Passport to Employment was in its second year in 2001 when an article was written about the youth participants in the *Downhomer* (Stuckless 2002).

<sup>262</sup> Lindsay Ferguson, a singer song-writer from Wakefield, Quebec was a part of the group hired at the Connemara hotel. She moved to Newfoundland in 1998 for two years and worked as a waitress at O'Reilly's Irish-Newfoundland Pub on George Street before going to Ireland. Ferguson lived in Ireland for two and a half years and moved back to Canada in January 2003 (2009).

to Ireland where he could be “immersed” in music. At the time, he found the St. John’s scene too small for the amount of music he wanted to play. Payne, who is from Cow Head on the GNP, had not met Séamus Creagh while Creagh was in Newfoundland but did so on his first evening in Cork, Ireland. He became good friends with Creagh. They played at many sessions together and Payne helped clear land on which Séamus built a house (2007b).

Daniel Payne and Graham Wells were in Ireland about the same time but Wells was in Galway City. Wells also visited Séamus Creagh in Cork during his time in Ireland. While Wells does not necessarily think Creagh was his biggest influence, he admits that:

[Séamus Creagh] was certainly an influence and I learned a bunch of tunes from him and he dragged me around Cork to different sessions. I love playing with him and he knows all kinds of great old tunes. I am going to say that he was an influence on me and my playing but I have probably been more influenced by accordion players. (2008a)

#### ***7.4.2 Confirming and Challenging Ideas of the Musical Connection between Ireland and Newfoundland***

I stated above that travelling and living in Ireland both challenged and supported the idea that Newfoundland instrumental music is related to Ireland. In general Ireland is viewed by these young musicians as being more vibrant, more diversified and more authentic. This section examines how traveling in Ireland made Newfoundland musicians think about Newfoundland music as it relates to Irish music.

Payne still feels that his style is influenced by his time in Ireland. One of the major points that came out during our talk was how Ireland helped Payne gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Newfoundland music. At the time he decided to go to

Ireland he was playing a lot of Irish tunes due to the availability of recordings. Similar to other musicians Payne was interested in Newfoundland tunes but there simply were not many tune books or recordings available as there are now. Payne decided to go to Ireland for immersion in a vibrant traditional music culture:

The main thing for me at the time was to go to a place where the culture was very strong and learn a lot and be immersed, but in coming back and forth, it took me a while to get over the idea that Newfoundland tunes are just messed up Irish tunes. In a way they are, but I think you can still respect them and play them with respect and then they can become something really excellent. At the time I wasn't really clued into that. I liked them and I wanted to find a way to play them but I had this problem with playing [them]. I think that attitude may have been around here at the time and maybe still is. (2007b)

Payne's ideas of Newfoundland music were challenged by going to Ireland and it improved his view of the music of his homeland. He suggests that part of the lack of respect for Newfoundland music is connected to the changing expectations of the audience. He links it to the shift from pure dance music to a listening context, in which there needs to be complex arrangements to maintain the audience's attention. This outlining of the transition supports Turino's theory of the continuum between participatory and presentational music in which melodic, harmonic tempo, rhythmic variety are added for interest (2008, 59). Payne states that:

When you compare the two [Newfoundland and Irish music], there's not really that many well-arranged, well-played albums of Newfoundland music out there. There is a lot of stuff that has been approached from that ...drum machine and bass kind of style, that Simani style. There is totally a place for that, I like a lot of Simani's stuff, [but] there are a lot of people who have imitated that with even less creativity and...I find the tune gets swamped in that. There are some people who have done it well, like Figgy Duff, and Christina Smith and Jean Hewson... They're taking these tunes and playing them with good ideas...and that's great but still it's a very shallow well. Then [if] you compare it with Irish tunes sometimes I think you'd think that [Irish] music is...just better music, but that's not the case. Our tunes just haven't had the amount of development and the amount of time put into them to shine that same way. (2007b)

Even the quickest of listens to Payne's solo album *Chain* (2008) will assure you that he is deepening the "well" of "well-arranged, well-played" traditional instrumental music produced in Newfoundland.

Chapter Six, discussed how the 1970s Newfoundland folk revival sought authentic outport musical and dance traditions in the outports. The community dance traditions died out by the 1970s and the musicians in this chapter did not have a chance to participate in that tradition except as a revival event. In the region around Cork, traditional set dancing is still a vibrant and regular event. Jason Whelan travelled to Cork to play for numerous dances in the *Sliabh Luachra* area around the border of County Cork and County Kerry. Similar to Ryan's Fancy finding traditional music still played at informal events in Newfoundland in the 1970s, being able to participate in a tradition which had died out in Newfoundland struck a chord with Whelan. It created a deep feeling of authenticity and recalled an historical form of musical sense of place for a Newfoundland musician. Whelan found a similarity between the music in *Sliabh Luachra* and Newfoundland. This partly came from the fact that they play a lot of polkas, known as single jigs in Newfoundland. The prevalence of the single is often discussed amongst musicians as a unique characteristic of Newfoundland fiddling. Whelan came to feel that Newfoundland music might be connected to an older Irish style. Fiddle music, like folk song privileges tunes which can be traced to a proverbial ancient place or "source":

[I] used to play a lot of Rufus' west coast singles...which are polkas. They... often have an extra beat, or a stomp, at the end or the middle of a tune. When I went over to Ireland I thought this was kind of unique, and people would say

‘play one of them Clare tunes, or play one of them Kerry tunes with the extra beat. Ahh, you’re from Newfoundland, you do stuff like that over there too.’ I was just amazed that they even knew we had tunes with extra beats. [The extra beats] were generally [added] so that the dancers could have an extra step, or an obvious place to change direction, or change a set figure. I thought that was a predominately Newfoundland... mistake that crept into the music, but it’s not. That’s where it came from. (Sutton et al. 2008)

This revelation confirmed Whelan’s concept of Newfoundland as closely related to Irish music by challenging his idea that “crooked” tunes were unique to Newfoundland music. As Smith has shown in her article “Crooked as the Road to Branch” asymmetrical tunes are not unique to Newfoundland but there is a much higher incidence of them in Newfoundland compared to other regions (2007a, 148-153). Crooked tunes are also found in Quebec, Appalachia, and Métis music in Manitoba (Duval 2011; Lederman 1991, 43-44; Marshall 2006, 183). I find it interesting that ‘crooked’ tunes are rhetorically relegated to the marginal Irish speaking *gaeltacht* areas of Ireland. Both western Cork and the Ring of Kerry, which is *Sliabh Luachra*, and the west of Ireland in Clare are *gaeltacht* regions. Does this suggest that Newfoundland music is a throwback to an older form of Irish music? Is Newfoundland in a similar situation to Cape Breton which is seen as a repository for Scotland’s “Golden Age of Fiddling”?<sup>263</sup> Other scholars have nuanced the repository concept with the acknowledgement that, while Cape Breton was established at the same time as the Golden Age and retains some traits, it has also developed its own style instead of staying as a museum piece (Doherty 2006, 108; G. Graham 2006, 139). For Newfoundland there has not been any in-depth research into this idea at this time. Irish accordionist Aidan Coffey had a slightly different take on why the

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<sup>263</sup> See Dunlay and Greenberg (1996, 1-2) for discussion of Cape Breton and the connections to the Golden Age of Fiddling in Scotland.

dances might have required an unusual structure. He suggests that the dance and the music may have had different roots and therefore one needed to be adjusted to the other.

Says Coffey:

I think the origin of [the extra beats]...was because of the dances that people [were] doing in Newfoundland. They...adjusted standard tunes and put an extra bar on to accommodate [the] dance that might have come from Brittany, or whose origins might have been in France...there's a mixing of cultures over in Newfoundland, so therefore the music adapted to satisfy the dancing.<sup>264</sup> (Creagh et al. 2007)

In 2004 eight Newfoundland musicians went to Ireland to perform at the *Fleadh* in Clonmell in County Tipperary, Ireland. These musicians were Rob Brown, Michelle Brophy, Graham Wells, Greg Walsh, Frank Maher, Pamela Morgan, Anita Best, and Rick West. Their impressions of how their music was received are interesting. The Irish recognized similarities but also recognized differences in the music. As the musicians at the *Fleadh* are intended to be Irish, or Irish-derived, some of the audience members attributed the different sound and feel of the music to an older style surviving in Newfoundland from *Sliabh Luachra* immigrants.<sup>265</sup> At the same time Greg Walsh felt the Newfoundland music was “largely dismissed as a kind of freaky experience for the *Ceoltas* people” (2008). Walsh sensed that it was hard for the Irish musicians to categorize the Newfoundlanders. The Newfoundlanders played Irish ensemble instruments including uilleann pipes, Irish flute, button accordion, fiddle, and bodhran but

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<sup>264</sup> French music is also noted for having extra beats and I believe Coffey was suggesting that there may have been French influence which resulted in asymmetrical structures.

<sup>265</sup> This comment may support the idea that Newfoundland music may have some roots in that area. I have not yet found any clear documentation of *Sliabh Luchra* or Kerry immigrants. John Mannion has done extensive work on the migration from southeast Ireland to Newfoundland but does not specifically mention Kerry. However when I was in that area in 2007, a wharf was pointed out to me as being where the boats from Waterford going to Newfoundland stopped for more passengers.



the music was slightly unusual. The tunes the Newfoundland group played were reminiscent of Irish tunes, but different at the same time. As Walsh put it, “We were blatantly different, but I don’t think anyone could really put a finger on why” (ibid.). He felt that there was a sense of connection to Irish music, but that connection was hard to pinpoint. One explanation was that the Newfoundlanders repertoire was similar to what was played in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Ireland and was now out of style. According to Walsh, he was told that the 2004 St. John’s session tunes had not been current Irish session material since the 1950s and a Gaelic song sung by Pamela Morgan had not been heard in Ireland in 150 years (ibid.). Rob Brown and Michelle Brophy referred to an article in an Irish newspaper which described their version of the tune “Cock of the North” or “Auntie Mary” to be “wildly different” from the Irish version, but the same newspaper identified the Emile Benoit tune “Brother’s Jig” as a Kerry slide rather than recognizing its French-Newfoundland roots (Brophy and Brown 2008).<sup>266</sup> Brophy felt that some Irish tunes have become “signature Newfoundland tunes” but adds that “it’s not as simple as us co-opting Irish music.” The following conversation ensued during our interview:

Brophy: The way we play tunes, even if we’re playing Irish tunes, is so vastly different from the way they play them over there. I guess it happens when you’re on an island and there is no constant interaction going on...But I don’t think we can deny the influence of Irish music here. There are some people who would say, “No, there is no Irish influence. This is Newfoundland-- it happened here.” But it didn’t. It had to come from somewhere.

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<sup>266</sup> It is often mentioned that Benoit’s original tunes sound Irish. I would suggest that from listening to the radio from Cape Breton and elsewhere as well as playing with musicians during travel he picked up some standard finger patterns and began using those in his compositions. I have heard Newfoundland crooked tunes often compared to Kerry slides (Sutton et al. 2008).

Brown: But it came from all the places they came [from]. I mean, it came from the English, it came from the Irish, it came from wherever.

Brophy: But you can't say that it blossomed here by itself.  
(Brophy and Brown 2008)

While both Brown and Brophy believe that much of Newfoundland music comes from Ireland and other historic immigrations they also recognize that Newfoundland has developed its own style, a development they attribute to historic isolation. Historic isolation is a common theme amongst musicians in talking about Newfoundland music, particularly urban musicians who are likely to compare Newfoundland music with Irish music. It is often brought up in reference to crooked or asymmetrical tunes and given as a reason for their unusual structure. This leads to either an endorsement of crooked tunes as a unique style feature for Newfoundland or a criticism as a deviation from the “correct” Irish version of a tune. For example, Ray Walsh believes that extra beats became an important part of the dance tradition but at the same time he regards them as a flaw developed over time as an isolated tradition which needs to be corrected for recordings (2002, 2008). I would suggest that in the past decade or so, with an increase in discussion of Newfoundland as compared to Irish music, early 21<sup>st</sup> century musicians are more likely to see crooked tunes as positive feature in the face of a transnational Irish repertoire. The musicians in the *Island to Island* project use this rhetoric to explain a divergent feature between Newfoundland and Irish music as a positive attribute.

These musicians' experiences of music and travel in Ireland and Newfoundland, has led them to reflect upon and differentiate between an Irish and a Newfoundland style of music. As suggested by Rodman, part of understanding one's sense of place is how

another place is evoked in comparison. Irish recordings and heritage had provided these musicians with a sense of how to relate to Ireland and Irish music. Their lived experiences in Ireland however, both challenged and confirmed their previous assumptions. These musicians have developed Newfoundland musical senses of place, which are connected to Ireland through music, yet distinguished by their Newfoundland roots. To many of these musicians, their experience of Newfoundland music is bound up with their experiences with Irish music. Through these experiences they have found both common and divergent musical ground with the Irish which has added depth to their own constructions of musical senses of place.

### ***7.5 “Irish” Pub Sessions in St. John’s, NL***

The international phenomenon of Irish music “sessions” in pubs is also common in St. John’s, NL.<sup>267</sup> Sessions are generally held in a pub or bar that welcomes musicians who gather and play together around a table for a few hours. They are informal gatherings of a participatory nature, in Turino’s sense, in which all players are welcome and there can be a wide range of skill levels and the goal is for the maximum number of people to participate (2008, 59). Each session tends to develop its own following of musicians, its own internal repertoire and etiquette. Although an egalitarian nature is the general idea of the session it is not always the case. Breslin has investigated the politics of participation in her work on sessions in St. John’s (2011).

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<sup>267</sup> I have personally played in Irish music sessions around the world including Australia, Japan, Ireland, U.S.A. and throughout Canada. This format has also been adopted by players of other styles and sometimes one will be invited to a Cape Breton, Scottish, or bluegrass session, just to name a few to which I’ve been invited.

These sessions can be a boost to a pub's customer base at a low time, for example, on a weekend afternoon or a weekday evening. Unlike concerts where the musicians are performing for an audience, at sessions the musicians are usually turned inward facing each other with their backs to other customers. Although this is changing, in St. John's, customers often carry on as if there is no music. In contrast, the expectation in Ireland is that the patrons listen quietly despite the informality. Daniel Payne describes the audience in Irish pubs during a session:

The music [in Cork] is a little bit more than background noise [as it is in St. John's]. People are tuned into what's going on, so when someone starts playing something quiet people listen. Usually it's not more than a small group of people who haven't clued in [to] that need to be told to be quiet. (2007b)

When Rob Murphy and Séamus Creagh arrived in St. John's in the 1980s there were no regular public sessions. Most traditional music occurred in private homes, at festivals or at the regular folk club night at Bridget's Pub. Desplanques reported that by the late 1980s or early 1990s, a few sessions were started but were soon discontinued (Creagh et al. 2007). The most regular session was on the closing night of the annual Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival in St. John's which Colin Carrigan described as the highlight of the year (2007). While living in Newfoundland, Creagh and Murphy had a major impact upon the younger generation of instrumentalists in St. John's. Murphy attempted to start sessions in various venues but the session he started at the Duke of Duckworth pub really took hold and inspired players such as Rob Brown, Michelle Brophy, Mike Hanrahan, Graham Wells and others (ibid.). Brown pointed out:

When we were first listening to, and getting into traditional music, we didn't have anyone from Newfoundland who was teaching us. When we started getting into

sessions, that was a lot of fun, it was great fun actually. Rob [Murphy] was the driving force behind that (Brophy and Brown 2008).

This statement shows the importance of personal contact between musicians. Brown and Brophy started in Irish-based music because they were mentored by musicians who played that style. Sessions are marked by the personal “small-group” contact between musicians. They can help form a strong sense of community and contribute to one’s musical sense of place. As previously mentioned, Fairbairn has suggested this was the reason for their beginning in the 1950s and 1960s amongst the ex-pat Irish community in London, England (1994, 581-582). Rob Brown points out that music brings together people who would otherwise not become friends:

Music is weird, especially traditional music. You make friends in certain ways, like Rob Murphy was in his forties when we met him, and we were in our twenties and Graham and Mike Hanrahan were in their teens....We used to think their parents must think we’re all a bunch of weirdoes because...we’re all hanging out together. I mean what do we have in common with a bunch of teenagers? We have music in common. (Brophy and Brown 2008)

Colin Carrigan, also feels that the sense of community is important. While he believes that Irish music can be “homogenizing” he also thinks it is:

good that people are playing together. When I was young there weren’t any sessions...and there is a good young crew coming up...as long as you’re playing music you like, with people you like, then you get culture beginning to happen. You can’t just limit yourself to the repertoire of two guys [Rufus Guinchard and Emile Benoit], nor can you just learn everything off albums and assume you’re part of a tradition....Tradition works by an oral passing on, and communication. (2007)

The open nature of most sessions can encourage amateur musicians to attend and play with professional musicians they would not otherwise have the opportunity to get to know. In this way sessions and the communities surrounding them strive to follow Elbourne’s definition of “active transmission of traditional music” between musicians.

Among the many incarnations of the session that Murphy started at The Duke of Duckworth was a move to the Ship Inn around the mid- to late-1990s. Wells began to attend these sessions once he was of legal age. He remembers that Murphy and guitarist-singer Larry Foley, of the Punters, were central to the sessions at the Ship Inn which were held on Saturdays at 5pm and ran until about 10pm (2008a). Eventually these sessions moved to O'Reilly's Irish-Newfoundland bar on George Street (Brophy and Brown 2008). When Murphy moved back to Ireland in the late 1990s, the session at O'Reilly's almost died as many of the regulars stopped coming. It was only through sheer "perseverance" that Brown, Brophy and Greg Walsh kept it going (ibid.).<sup>268</sup>

When Creagh left the city in 1993 there were few session opportunities but he was amazed upon his return, enthusiastically saying, "They're flying now!" (2007).<sup>269</sup> Desplanques credits the currently strong session culture to the fact that when she and Creagh returned to Ireland they hosted a regular stream of visiting Newfoundland musicians in their house in Cork. She believes the Newfoundlanders saw sessions in Ireland and were inspired to bring the session environment back home (ibid.). During his time in Cork, one session Daniel Payne particularly liked to attend was at the Ovens Pub in Cork on a Sunday afternoon when the atmosphere was mellower than the raucous

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<sup>268</sup> Since this interview in 2008, the session held at O'Reilly's for over a decade moved again to Shamrock City but has been discontinued. The scene is in constant flux. There is another session in the Georgetown Pub which is out of the main downtown on Tuesday nights. On Friday nights, there is a long standing session at Erin's Pub on Water Street and Saturday and Sunday afternoons now host a small session at Nautical Nellies and Bridie Molloy's respectively. Nautical Nellies became part of the session scene, although it is not an Irish pub, during the 2008 North Atlantic Fiddle Convention when they agreed to stay open after hours with the session in the rear of the pub so musicians could play all night.

<sup>269</sup> Fairbairn mentions "flying" as a term used to indicate when the quality and the tempo of the session is high (1994, 568).

Saturday night sessions.<sup>270</sup> Wells found Ireland inspiring; not only was the quality of music and musicianship high, but he was able to participate. In comparison to the mellow Cork session Wells and Ferguson describe the Galway sessions as “huge” and “really fantastic” with always ten or more people playing and “a little more chaotic” than St. John’s (Ferguson 2009; Wells 2008a). Wells feels that his time in Galway was an asset to his musicianship due to the quality and quantity of music to which he was exposed. As he explains:

[There were] sessions every night in Galway, sometimes three or four. I got to see lots of great concerts [for] cheap...it was fantastic! There was music everywhere. (2008a)

Creagh, Desplanques and Murphy became unofficial Irish musical ambassadors in St. John’s, as their friendship was partially the inspiration for some musicians to travel to Ireland. Either way, since the mid- to late 1990s, a strong pub session scene has developed in St. John’s with currently between three and five sessions a week. Several of these sessions rely heavily on the international standard Irish session repertoire with few Newfoundland tunes.<sup>271</sup> The majority of people who attend are under forty and likely had more contact with Irish recordings and Irish instrumentalists, such as Creagh or Murphy, or those musicians who learned from them, than the older generation of Newfoundland dance musicians. The main proponents of this younger scene were influenced by

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<sup>270</sup> I went to this session in 2007 and must agree with his assessment that it was mainly musicians and regulars and very respectful but relaxed.

<sup>271</sup> The few attempts at Newfoundland only sessions have not lasted long. The closest session is a regular Tuesday lunchtime concert by the Auntie Crae Band. This is essentially a closed session in which an invitation to play is considered polite. During the editing of this dissertation Auntie Crae’s closed in December 2010, and the next establishment to occupy the building, the Rocket Bakery, has retained this session on Tuesdays.

musicians from Cork and several, including those on the *Island to Island* CD, have travelled to Ireland to experience the music for themselves.

### ***7.6 Crossing Over through the Recording Studio: the Island to Island Project***

*Island to Island: Traditional Music from Ireland and Newfoundland* produced in 2003, featured musicians from St. John's, Newfoundland and Cork, Ireland (Creagh and Desplanques). The instrumental music traditions of Newfoundland and Labrador have always exemplified cross-overs from the Old to the New Worlds. The fiddle repertoire is based in traditions stemming from the British Isles, Ireland, and France and was likely first brought to the island with fishermen and settlers starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century radio and recordings transmitted the regional repertoires of other traditional musicians, often Irish in character, based in continental North America. At the time, these were primarily one-way transmissions *into* the Newfoundland tradition with the exception of a few visiting or resident Irish musicians, such as the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy, who learned local Newfoundland music. The last few decades have seen a rise in exchanges between musicians in the St. John's and Southern Shore regions and Ireland, particularly Cork and Waterford. The following case study addresses and examines the *Island to Island* CD as a 21st-century collaboration between geographically distant locations. It looks at how modern technology facilitated this exchange, the recording choices made, approaches to repertoire selection, and the reception of the CD by reviewers. The *Island to Island* project could be viewed as a microcosm of the Irish extending their concept of Irish space out into their diaspora and Newfoundlanders seeking to explore their Irish roots whilst also forging their own



connected but separate musical senses of place. It is also an indication of the importance of both historical and recent connections between Newfoundland and Ireland on musical, cultural, governmental and personal levels.

### ***7.7 Musicians Featured on Island to Island***

There are eight musicians featured on the *Island to Island* disc, three from Cork and five from St. John's. From Cork there are Séamus Creagh (fiddle), Aidan Coffey (accordion) and Mick Daly (guitar). These three played together regularly and Coffey and Creagh were a recording duo. Together they produced an album simply entitled *Traditional Music from Ireland* (Creagh and Coffey ca. 1999). From Newfoundland, the five instrumentalists are Jason Whelan (bouzouki and guitar), Colin Carrigan (fiddle), Graham Wells (accordion), Billy Sutton (banjo) and Paddy Mackey (bodhran). These musicians also play together regularly in pub sessions, on stage and in recordings. Wells' solo album *Graham Wells: Traditional Music from Newfoundland and Labrador* (2008b) featured many of these same musicians as accompanists. [Please see Appendix One for detailed biographies.]

The Cork musicians were selected by Creagh on the basis that they played and worked together regularly. Selection of Newfoundland musicians was a little more difficult. Jason Whelan and Graham Wells were the first musicians contacted by Creagh in his role as producer and organizer. Whelan and Wells selected other musicians with whom they were comfortable, taking into consideration the desired ensemble balance. Selection of musicians often turns out to be quite an informal process. In a small scene

like that of St. John's it could have easily grown to include many more equally talented musicians.

### **7.8 Recording Practices**

So how does one go about co-ordinating a collaborative CD across an ocean? Ideally, each group would be able to travel to the other country, to rehearse, record, and then launch the album with a tour of both islands. Considering the funding available for traditional instrumental music is limited, the ideal was not an option. As one of the Newfoundland musicians pointed out, "Playing tunes is an indulgence" and not what pays the bills (Sutton et al. 2008). Fortunately for musicians and audiences alike, modern recording technology made this project possible.

When Mick Daly was kind enough to give me a copy of *Island to Island* in 2004, I did not realize that the musicians had not travelled. As audience/consumer, I simply assumed that the performers had recorded together in a studio. In actual fact, the Newfoundland and Irish musicians recorded separate tracks in their home cities. The musicians from St. John's sent their tracks to Cork where selections were made and the mastering was done. Carrigan spoke of this as being a "virtual collaboration" (2007).<sup>272</sup> With the exception of Creagh and Desplanques, who travelled to St. John's to oversee the recording sessions, the musicians St. John's and Cork did not meet until after the project

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<sup>272</sup> This is an example of "schizogenesis" as Feld uses the term (1994, 265-271). Feld is discussing how world beat music both splits the music from its location through recording and recombines it with another music to make a new music under a new genre label (Ibid., 266). Feld argues that world beat then claims "a new, postmodern species of 'authenticity' [through] creolization" (Ibid.). *Island to Island* takes two schizophonic (recorded and mediated) musics and put them together to claim that they are essentially the same type of music.

was finished. For Carrigan, then, this could be seen as potentially “placeless” as he did not meet the Irish musicians, Coffey and Daly, until a few years later.

In line with the trend of today’s recording styles, neither group recorded in a formal studio but in their homes. In St. John’s, Jason Whelan oversaw the recording in his mother’s living room, where hardwood floors and high ceilings contributed to a resonant bright sound (Sutton et al. 2008). In Cork, the Irish musicians recorded in Mick Daly’s living room which has a futon and many bookcases. This resulted, of course, in different room sounds and the studio which mastered the recordings in Killarney, had to compensate for these variances, making the Newfoundland tracks warmer and the Cork tracks brighter (Creagh et al. 2007).

Both groups chose the same method of recording, “live off the floor” instead of recording one instrument at a time, a practice often equated with the polished recordings of major music labels. Carrigan stated that it was an aesthetic choice explaining that, by playing together they had the chance to respond or play “off each other.” This method facilitated their desire to “capture not slickness, but life” (2007). By playing in ensemble, they could best recreate the liveliness of the music in its normal setting. Whelan, the sound engineer for St. John’s, explained that:

A lot of the fiddle and accordion recordings were done just facing each other with a cardioid microphone, which is generally not responsive in the back. It was pretty much just a live performance. We just did a couple of takes of each one and we picked the ones we wanted. (Sutton et al. 2008)

The same was true in Cork, where Creagh and Coffey recorded the fiddle and accordion together. The only instruments overdubbed on most tracks were Daly’s guitar and Mackey’s bodhran. These were overdubbed for practical reasons. The bodhran was loud

and echoed in the stark Newfoundland room, likely bleeding into the other microphones. Daly was the Irish sound engineer and recorded his guitar later as he was busy attending the technical side during recording. Another exception was when Coffey overdubbed an accordion part on one track, in order to accompany the St. John's musicians. How the sound engineers constructed the idea of "liveness" on *Island to Island* differed from some other projects described by ethnomusicologists such as Meintjes. She discussed the aesthetic of microphone placement in South African studios and the politics behind how different groups are recorded based on the perception of their authenticity. Ironically, she pointed to one instance when the most extensive microphone set-up, seventeen mics, were used in order to produce the most authentic and least mediated sound (2005, 14).

The choice to record live off the floor reflects two aspects of the tradition as practised today. First, it comes close to recreating the session, or the environment in which instrumental music is most often performed. Secondly, it also reflects the normal social and musical relationships between the performers. Fairbairn has researched the origins of the Irish music session and how, in an informal group performance context, it has overtaken the solo tradition, offering both a venue for socializing and learning new music (1994, 566-569). By recording in an ensemble scenario, the *Island to Island* musicians are maintaining the current social and musical tradition of which they are regularly a part. In other ways they were going against the multi-tracking standards that are widely accepted in all genres of music recording. Porcello has shown how Austin, Texas recording studios go to great lengths to produce a "live" and "authentic" sound in their recordings, partly in order to distinguish themselves from the highly controlled image of Nashville (2005, 104). Ironically, one of the techniques in Austin and many

other places is to record the rhythm and accompaniment tracks first as an ensemble and then have the soloists overdub (ibid., 105-106). This was directly opposite to the *Island to Island* session protocol in which the solo fiddle and accordion parts were recorded together and overdubbed by some of the accompanists. As noted by Whelan, microphone placement was important so that there was no bleed-through from other instruments, but beyond this precaution, microphones seem to have been trusted to convey something of the musician's actual experience (Sutton et al 2008). There was very little manipulation of sound during the recording of *Island to Island* simply the use of good microphones, placed at an appropriate distance from each instrument while still allowing eye contact, no headphone mixes, limited overdubbing and limited manipulation. While the choice to record the whole ensemble with minimal interference was presented to me as an informal approach it reflects a reaction against a commonly held belief that "a well-mixed record is usually one that is recorded in a way that devalues, and often out-right discourages, live performance in the studio" as so often musicians need to record ensemble tracks individually (Porcello 2005, 106).

### **7.9 Music Featured on *Island to Island***<sup>273</sup>

This section considers the music selected for the *Island to Island* project to illuminate the connections between Ireland and Newfoundland, or more specifically between St. John's and Cork. The liner notes suggest that the two musics are very similar comparing the collaboration as a "meeting of cousins" (Creagh and Desplanques 2003). My interviews with the participating musicians, however, led me to believe they intended

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<sup>273</sup> Please see Appendix Six for list of tracks on *Island to Island*.

to highlight the differences between their traditions as well as similarities (Carrigan 2007; Creagh et al. 2007; Creagh and Desplanques 2003; Sutton et al. 2008). The performers were not overly concerned with drawing attention to the historical connections by selecting music specifically from regions which are ancestrally related. Instead of selecting tunes specifically from the southwest of Ireland or the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, the chosen music reflected their own tastes and experiences as modern musicians who have the resources to choose from any region within their tradition. The Cork musicians, Creagh, Daly and Coffey, specialize in music from the *Sliabh Luachra* region, which includes Cork and Kerry, and they played a number of these tunes, but did not limit themselves to that region (see tracks 7.1, 7.2 and 9.1 in Appendix Six). The Newfoundland musicians may have found it difficult to choose tunes specifically from the Avalon Peninsula because there are few tunes available in recordings or printed format which are identified as being specifically from the St. John's region. Therefore the musicians called on the "imagined community" of Newfoundland as a whole in their assumption of suitable music to compare with Ireland. For the purposes of this analysis, I focus on the music selected to represent Newfoundland.

The fourteen tracks on the *Island to Island* CD are split evenly between the musicians from Cork and St. John's. Three of these could be considered cross-over tracks. For example, the Cork musicians play one set of Newfoundland tunes from the west coast of the island, "Flying Reel" composed by Emile Benoit and "Hound's Tune" from the repertoire of Rufus Guinchard. In return, Carrigan and Wells play a set of Irish Donegal reels from the repertoire of John Doherty (1900-1980). Although the CD appears to be drawing similarities between the two traditions, these selections are far

removed, geographically and musically, from the actual historical and recent connections. Benoit and Guinchard had limited Irish influence and according to MacAoidh, Donegal has quite a bit of Scottish influence (1994, 49-50). Physically these regions are removed from both the homes of the musicians and the historical immigration patterns. Benoit and Guinchard are from the West Coast, well over 600 kilometers from the Avalon Peninsula; and Donegal in the northeast is also geographically removed from the southwest of Ireland. Benoit descended from the French tradition within Newfoundland and Guinchard's music as noted by Russell has both French and West Country English traits (2000, v). Track three features Coffey playing along with the St. John's musicians on more Rufus Guinchard tunes. It is on this track that the "virtual collaboration" took place through the recording studio.

The CD contains fourteen tracks but many more were recorded. Sutton, Wells and Carrigan originally did rough cuts of at least sixteen sets which included forty-one tunes. These tunes included both Irish and Newfoundland tunes often mixed together in a medley. The recordings were sent to Cork where Creagh made suggestions of what should be recorded for the final CD.

I asked each group of musicians how they selected tunes for the CD. Musicians in Cork all agreed that they recorded a number of tunes that they liked from those they were regularly playing. The Newfoundland musicians took a different approach guided partly by the producers Séamus Creagh and Marie-Annick Desplanques who asked that they look for pieces not currently in vogue and not recently recorded. Carrigan stated that he tried to find tunes with that "identifiably Newfoundland sound" (2007). Wells said that they "made a point of finding tunes that were Newfoundland and off the beaten

track” by looking through old recordings and locally made tapes at O’Brien’s music store (Carrigan 2007; Sutton et al. 2008). While the CD would appear to be a venue for showcasing similarities between the two islands, it would also seem that the musicians were attempting to use it to highlight their differences as well. Despite their efforts, Coffey expressed his hope that the Newfoundlanders would have selected fewer Irish tunes, but he understands that “Irish music is more ubiquitous” than Newfoundland music. He explained that in comparison, it was harder for him to find Newfoundland music as there was not the same amount of “easy access” to recordings and tune books (Creagh et al. 2007). Coffey explained the differences he found between Newfoundland and Irish music stating that “the structure of the tunes from Newfoundland were different” with unexpected extra beats (ibid.).

There are a total of thirty-one tunes in fourteen sets on *Island to Island*. Of these, seventeen are presented as Newfoundland tunes with the remaining fourteen being Irish tunes. In total there are nine tunes which show deviations from the standard AABB and 16-beat form. Please see Appendix Seven for a list of asymmetrical tunes on *Island to Island*. Eight are from Newfoundland and one from Ireland, but the latter is played by the Newfoundlanders. The connection between Newfoundland music and crooked tunes as a unique style marker is evidently strong for these musicians as all four of the Newfoundland tunes chosen by the Irish musicians are asymmetrical. With almost a third of the selections on the CD being crooked, when normally the presence of one asymmetrical tune on an Irish recording would be unusual, it seems a concerted effort was made to draw attention to this aspect of the Newfoundland tradition. It is significant that these tunes were recorded “crooked” and were not “straightened” in an attempt to



“correct” the tunes to standard format. Coffey noticed that they were different from the usual Irish tunes he plays:

I recall learning some of [the Newfoundland] tunes and I found them really nice but very, very different. The amount of bars...and the amount of notes in a bar would be different to what we have in our tunes. Ours are more, like in a jig you’ve six notes per bar and a certain amount of bars in each part of a tune but that would be totally different, you’d sort of have an extra bar after where you’d thought the thing should end with the Newfoundland tunes... it was very hard at first, you sort of have to change your mind set to play them properly. (ibid.)

When I asked if they had asymmetrical tunes like this in the Irish repertoire Coffey responded:

No we don’t have, well, now that I think about it, there are some old tunes, like slip jigs and some unusual set dances that would have some unusual lengths to the parts in a tune. But I think 99% of the dance music is quite rigid in that you get the same amount of bars per part and you always get the same amount of beats per bar, in all reels and all jigs and things like that. That is what we’re accustomed to. (ibid.)

Considering Coffey’s responses I find it interesting, that the first of the Donegal reels, which Wells and Carrigan played was also crooked with nine bars in the A section.

The following tunes recorded on *Island to Island* are asymmetrical. [Please see Appendices Six and Seven for a track list and table of asymmetries.] “Blueberry Quadrille” (2.3) aka “Blackberry Quadrille” has an extra beat in the high strain in bar 4; “Lizzie’s Tune” (3.1) bars 7 and 15 are 9/8 giving each turn 17 beats rather than the standard 16; “Sam’s Jig” (3.2) includes one 9/8 bar in the A strain and two in B giving 17 and 18 beats respectively; “Flying Reel” (10.1) by Emile Benoit where each strain is only 8 beats long, A is played three times and B twice; “Hound’s Tune” (10.2) the low strain is 9 bars, or 18 beats long; “West Bay Centre” by Emile Benoit has a low strain with a beat

structure, including the repeat, of 6+7+ 6+6 when it returns to the start but 6+7+6+7 on the final turn, meaning it has only 6 bars and is 13+12 beats on the repeat but 13 + 13 beats at the end. These tunes can be found in Kelly Russell's book *The Fiddle Music of Newfoundland and Labrador Volume 1: Rufus Guinchard and Emile Benoit* (2000, 4, 12, 13, 17, 36, 56). "Captains and Ship" (6.1) was originally a song and carries an A BB or 8 beats plus 16 beats form; "Mussels in the Corner" (11.3) is normally 16 + 16 beats long however this version has an extra beat at the end of the low strain making it 17+16. This version is accredited to Fogo Island where another major variant adds an entire new section making it a 3-part tune. Only one of the listed Irish tunes as played by Newfoundlanders was asymmetrical. "Johnny Doherty's" (4.1) has 9 bars in the first turn giving it 18 beats.

The Newfoundlanders joked saying that, they looked under rocks and tables to find lesser known tunes. Whelan, who spent time with Creagh in Ireland playing music in the *Sliabh Luachra* area of Kerry, remarked that the Kerry slides and polkas:

I would [play] them all the time, I loved them and a lot of players over there don't like them...it's over looked in the relation[ship] between Newfoundland traditional music and [Irish music]. All the Newfoundland tunes, I'm sure in some form they're all variations of, or they're heavily influenced [by Irish music] because that was the kind of music that was here. (Sutton et al. 2008)

Billy Sutton also echoed this viewpoint stating:

That's where a lot of the people that were here over the past 500 years came from. Like you said there was no radio, [the music] got passed down and people playing at dances and the tunes might have changed and evolved over the years and changed slightly but...that's where they came from. (ibid.)

My M.A. research shows that Newfoundland instrumental tunes have come from a variety of places including England, the United States, Cape Breton, Ireland and local

composition. The idea that all fiddle music comes from Ireland is a common trope in local conversation but is not substantiated by research on tune histories.

Coffey suggested two reasons that Newfoundland tunes might sound Irish. Coffey's first line of reasoning corresponds with previous opinions stating that music reflects the regional background of an original immigrant population. In the past few decades the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century waves of Irish workers have been privileged in discourse surrounding the historical connections between Newfoundland and Ireland. The second point Coffey notes is the globalization of traditional music in general and the boom of Irish music in particular. Coffey recognized the international influence and movement of Irish music stating that it is, "available all over the world so it's no surprise, they would have a fair repertoire of Irish music" (Creagh et al. 2007).

A closer examination of the tunes selected for the *Island to Island* CD, shows that the Newfoundlanders performed only three Irish-derived or associated tunes, excluding the Donegal cross-over tracks (4.1, 4.2). [Please see Appendix Eight for a list of origins and associations of these tunes.] Two of these three have strong connections to the United States, through the popular New York City based ensemble, the McNulty Family discussed in Chapter Five. The names of the tunes have changed whilst on the island but the tracks "Kitty Jones" (8.2) and "Mussels in the Corner" (11.3) were recorded by the McNultys as "Stack of Wheat" or "Ann Carawath" and "Maggie in the Woods" in 1950 and 1951 respectively. "Maggie in the Woods" or "Mussels in the Corner" became closely identified with the provincial fiddle and accordion tradition when it was selected as the tune to be played by participants in the "Accordion Revolution." It has, however,

gone through significant changes since the McNulty tour.<sup>274</sup> The version on this CD has an extra beat between the low and high strains, making it sound more “Newfoundland” in accordance with the heavy emphasis on crooked tunes by the current generation of musicians. The other Irish-derived tune, “Pussy Cat Got Up in the Plumtree” was recorded by Newfoundlander Wilf Doyle in 1960, and also by the Bothy Band as “This is My Love Do You Like Her?” in 1977.

The “Blackberry Quadrille,” presented here as the “Blueberry Quadrille” (2.3) was popularized by the famous Canadian fiddler Don Messer. Under Rufus Guinchard’s fingers it gained an extra beat and it is this version which is recorded on *Island to Island*. Four more tunes from Guinchard’s repertoire (3.1, 3.1, 10.2, 11.2) are also included and all but one are crooked, as are both of the Emile Benoit compositions (6.3, 10.1). Three recently composed tunes by Avalon Peninsula musicians, Geoff Butler and Billy Dinn (8.1, 13.1, 13.2) and four other Newfoundland tunes (2.1, 6.1, 6.2, 11.1), not traced to other sources were part of the Newfoundland offerings on *Island to Island*.

Reviewers from *Folk World*, *The Living Tradition*, *Irish Music Magazine*, *The Irish World* and *The Irish Post* all reviewed the recording positively and remarked on the similarity of the two musics (Keller 2004, np; Malcolm 2003, np; Poole 2003, np; Saunders ca. 2003, np). One reviewer admits that he could not tell the difference between the two groups and another suggests that the Newfoundland tunes might be more “authentic” than modern Irish music (Malcolm 2003, np; Saunders ca. 2003, np). Sutton, Wells and Whelan, all of whom play Irish session music regularly, agree that musicians are more discerning in pinpointing stylistic differences than the general listening public.

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<sup>274</sup> Please see Chapter Five, section 5.11.3 for analysis.

It could be that reviewers were primed to look for similarities from the liner notes and found them, while the musicians were aware of the differences and highlighted them musically if not textually.

I agree that the instrumentation is quite similar and unless listening particularly closely there is not much that stands out other than the asymmetry. I did feel that there were differences between the two groups of musicians, which were slightly downplayed for this recording. The Irish musicians played at a generally more relaxed pace, with well-defined down beats and strong/weak beat patterns. In comparison to the Newfoundland players, this perhaps gives a feeling of sitting slightly back in the beat at times (still in time, but not anticipating the next notes) which gives the music a slightly peppy but relaxed swing and lift. The Newfoundland musicians, I found, played slightly faster and tended to “sit forward” in the beat, anxious to keep going, which gives the music more of a drive. While there was certainly a strong and steady beat I found there to be less difference between the strong and weak beats, thus smoothing out the metrical structures and allowing for asymmetries to be played without a stark “bump” in the feeling of the music. That said they did tend to accent extra beats at the end of phrase, which in Newfoundland dancing usually corresponded with a stomp and turn from the dancers. Being familiar with some of these tunes I can also say that the cadential patterns are different between Irish and Newfoundland music.<sup>275</sup> These rhythmic accent and tempo differences can be viewed as very minute to the point of being individual

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<sup>275</sup> I hope someday to conduct an in-depth analysis of standard phrase ending patterns. As a fiddler I find them to be quite different between styles.

preferences but when compared to the larger backgrounds of Newfoundland and Irish musics I find them to be in line with the common perceptions of the regional styles.

The *Island to Island* CD has been well received and, considering it caters to a niche market, the musicians are pleased with the sales. One major hurdle to the selling of the product is distribution. The grant money from the INP did not cover distribution costs and to send discs from Ireland to Newfoundland is very expensive and risky. Due to bad experiences of CDs being damaged or going missing by regular mail Creagh and Desplanques ask friends travelling back and forth to hand carry them to Newfoundland (Creagh et al. 2007).

### **7.10 Conclusions**

What is the result of this musical exchange between Newfoundland and Ireland? It has been shown that there are deep historical ties between the two islands but that recent personal contacts between Irish and Newfoundland musicians are a more significant factor helping to shape today's tradition in St. John's. These personal connections are quite important to musicians. The liner notes strongly suggest that *Island to Island* successfully demonstrates strong musical links stating that "tunes from both traditions blend easily together and there is a unity of sound that could not be contrived" (Creagh and Desplanques 2003, 2). Further, the liner notes say that Irish music in Newfoundland has been protected by isolation and represents a "fairly pure form of the craft" (ibid.). There is no doubt that there are many Irish derived tunes in Newfoundland and that our tradition owes a great repertorial debt to Ireland both historically and recently through travel, visiting musicians and recordings. However, I wonder why when

the musicians made an effort to showcase non-Irish based Newfoundland tunes, including a high number of crooked tunes, reviewers still viewed the resulting music as being essentially Irish? Has Newfoundland been so enveloped into the Irish diaspora that all its music must be considered Irish? Is it that the musicians are so adept that they make everything sound easy and do not make the extra or lack of beats sound out of place? Does the similar instrumentation fool the ear? Has Creagh, and by corollary his Irish colleagues, ended up with a Newfoundland accent in his music? Or is it that the post-dance generation of Newfoundland players has learned so much from Irish recordings and travel that they can “walk on water” between the two? Or is it simply that there is such a strong connection, despite odd structures and newly composed tunes that our roots are showing despite apparent efforts to the contrary? As I have shown, this connection between Newfoundland and Irish music has been more strongly constructed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century through electronic mass media rather than through a genetic musical link to original musics of 19<sup>th</sup>-century immigrants. A number of the crooked tunes chosen for the Newfoundland tracks can be traced to modern pre-media influences on the island and therefore provide extra emphasis to this point.<sup>276</sup>

How does the *Island to Island* project and others like it benefit both islands? Certainly an international collaboration helps bring the relatively obscure Newfoundland tradition into international light. Irish listeners will learn more about how Irish music and culture has interacted with so many vibrant traditions around the world. Modern recording technology here has allowed for the meeting of musics that might not otherwise

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<sup>276</sup> This is not to discount broadsides and tune books available in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but I am considering here the radio, television and recordings which so easily transmitted musics regardless of local tradition.

meet on CD for the general public to hear. This CD could perhaps be used as a model for a virtual meeting of musics from other closely related traditions;<sup>277</sup> it could help to illuminate those touchy questions of tune nationalism and subtle stylistic differences which are so important to instrumentalists, while providing new musical connections for the general public. Although localization is increasing in response to globalization, it is a fact that technology, be it in the form of radio, recordings or digital downloads, is embraced by fiddlers in even the most isolated of communities. Playing tunes with musicians across an ocean is just another expression of this. Paul Greene pointed out in *Wired for Sound* “music can now no longer be adequately modeled as something that happens in a local context and employs only the expressive means specific to a locality” (2005a, 2).

The social and musical connections between Newfoundland and Ireland have been growing stronger in recent years. These connections, fuelled in part by artistic endeavours such as the *Island to Island* project are crossing over and over creating a stronger and stronger weave. Without modern recording technology, high quality collaborations, whether virtual or personal, could not seek to highlight our similarities and our differences. Perhaps casual listeners will not hear extra beats in the music but musicians from either side of the “pond” will notice, and note, the collaboration of two different but complementary traditions getting to know each other through modern media.

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<sup>277</sup> I think the idea of musicians from related traditions collaborating on a musical and artistic level to be quite interesting. The technique of a “virtual” collaboration through technology makes this possible. Since this chapter was written another similar CD has been produced which examines the English-Newfoundland musical connections (Wren Trust et al. 2010).



## **Chapter Eight:** ***Conclusions***

### ***8.1 Introduction***

This dissertation has nuanced the understanding of Newfoundland music by examining how specific Irish and Newfoundland musicians have represented place through electronic mass media in three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. By investigating the interaction between Irish and Newfoundland musicians we have come to discover how music and ideas of place have been impacted by media (radio, television, recordings and, more recently, YouTube.com and online resources). I set out to explore these concepts by examining the role of Irish people and musicians in the cultural history of the province, by exploring radio, television and sound recordings available in Newfoundland as well as inter-personal contacts with visiting and resident Irish musicians. I took as my basic premise Halpert's statement that, "a vigorous folk culture is not overwhelmed by modern commercial music" and such a culture is selective in its adoption of elements from commercial media, to be used for its own purposes (1975, v).

### ***8.2 Cultural History and Cultural Heritage***

"Britain's oldest Colony and Canada's newest province." (Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage 2010b, np; see Smallwood 1961, MUN1961-0003). This often quoted statement about Newfoundland and Labrador centres place as consistently "away" from the physical geographical location of the island and Labrador. Thus, defining Newfoundland and Labrador in relation to Britain, Canada or Ireland seems a natural

inclination. England and Canada have historically defined political frameworks but particularly since the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, Newfoundlanders have looked to Ireland as a place for cultural heritage, whether or not their ancestry links them to that country.

Chapter Three outlined Newfoundland's history as a British colony with British merchant classes. Immigration patterns revealed that the population was historically split between English and Irish immigrants with one outnumbering the other during various periods and at various locations around the Island. While this study does take into account other regions of the island, the discussions focused primarily on the Avalon Peninsula, specifically the St. John's region around which most of the Irish population settled.

The high Irish population statistics from a short period of intense Irish immigration to the Avalon Peninsula in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century have been used extensively in the discourse surrounding the construction of Newfoundland as an Irish place.<sup>278</sup> In St. John's and surrounding areas, the Irish were populous and historically important for the fishery and Catholicism. Irish men and women were hired as servants and labourers. Near St. John's their abundance often caused worry and complaints amongst the English merchants who saw the Irish as a source of social disturbance, and yet the immigrations of Irish workers helped to sustain the Island's economy.

It is sometimes postulated that Irish culture and music were brought to Newfoundland during the largest immigration period in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Certainly some music was brought with those immigrants, as music was also brought with the

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<sup>278</sup> As previously discussed this discourse is linked in particular to the MOU and its arm-length funding body of the Ireland Newfoundland Partnership and its funding projects including the provincial museum, The Rooms', exhibit called *The Fishing Ground*.

French, Scottish and English; but, as this dissertation has shown, a good deal of the Irish repertoire and sense of Irish musicality in Newfoundland was introduced by the electronic mass media during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This illustrates the history vs. heritage dichotomy described by Lowenthal in which he states that heritage can be fabricated in several ways including “updating” or revisiting history and selectively privileging certain events or people in light of “present qualities we want to see” (1998, 12). Once Newfoundland was disowned by the British through de-colonialization and found its new (uneasy) position within Canada, Newfoundlanders began looking to our pre-Confederation rural past for an identity to trust. The outport past and its arts were privileged as being the “true” Newfoundland culture. Ireland is evoked as having a similar and very strong, rich musical culture; thus as the Irish were a part of our immigration past and Irish music was heard on radio, television and recordings, I assert that Ireland became the assumed and “imagined” source of songs and tunes.

During different periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish instrumentalists have risen to international prominence through the recordings. This music was both available and interesting to Newfoundland musicians who then learned new Irish music. An assumption developed that connected the historical Irish immigrations to the prevalence of Irish music heard, and re-recorded, on electronic mass media in Newfoundland. Newfoundland music in general and instrumental music in particular, became constructed as Irish music. This assumption was expressed by several musicians in this study and in my fieldwork including both Newfoundland and Irish musicians. Their viewpoint is that most Newfoundland music, particularly instrumental music, is originally Irish and that it has evolved, or devolved, here in isolation. Certainly this assumption is not borne out in

the folksong collections. The strong majority of the folksongs published in the major collections are English in origin, even considering collectors' biases. This is not to say that there are not some Irish songs in the oral tradition (see Neilands 1992, 59-74). As also shown in my MA work the dance music repertoire was made up of Irish, English, French, American and locally composed tunes (Osborne 2003, 142-156). The assumption that *all* instrumental music is Irish strips Newfoundland fiddlers of their creativity, compositional abilities, and varied historical backgrounds. This approach requires musicians to be completely beholden to another location for their musical senses of place. At the same time, it is important to recognize the contributions that Irish music, vocal and instrumental, has made within Newfoundland music. These contributions, as shown in this dissertation, have been significant. This research has focused on the music brought into the province through visiting Irish musicians and media, rather than music handed down from 19<sup>th</sup>-century immigrants.

### ***8.3 Comparing Constructions of Irishness in Newfoundland's Musical Senses of Place***

The three case studies under examination occur over a period of almost 60 years (ca. 1944 - 2003) and represent three periods of the construction of Irishness in Newfoundland music. The experiences and methods of the musicians in all three eras were quite different and yet there are similarities between the case studies. All three groups had two-way musical interactions with Newfoundland music and musicians and promoted Newfoundland music (to varying degrees) off the island through radio, recordings and television. All three groups were accepted into the "imagined" community

of Newfoundlanders by nature of their virtual (via radio or television) or actual residence in the province and engagement with Newfoundland music. As Newfoundland musicians began re-recording Irish music, and as Irish music became part of the province's musical soundscape, it helped to define Newfoundland music as Irish in the ears of listeners. Newfoundlanders were proud, particularly in the case of Ryan's Fancy's, that Irish musicians would choose Newfoundland as their home.

There were differences between the case studies, which range from the nature of the time periods examined, and the origins of performance styles, to their musical construction of Irishness. While the McNulty Family stemmed from the vaudeville tradition, Ryan's Fancy emerged from the 1960s Dublin Irish revival. Séamus Creagh was in contact with Newfoundland musicians during the 1990s and early 2000s Irish/Celtic revival. As will be discussed below all three groups participated in the presentational/high fidelity formats and yet they all came from differing participatory backgrounds. Of the three, Séamus Creagh, was the only musician to facilitate the travel of Newfoundlanders to Ireland rather than one-way travel of Irish musicians to Newfoundland.<sup>279</sup> So while there was two-way interaction between all three groups in that they all learned and performed Newfoundland music, the first true reciprocal exchanges did not occur regularly until the last twenty years in great part due to Creagh.<sup>280</sup> This is not surprising as there was increasing integration of the Irish musicians over the three studies. Although Wilf Doyle claims to have played with the

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<sup>279</sup> I see this being enabled both by the rise in accessibility of trans-Atlantic air travel and by his return to Ireland after which he maintained ties and invited Newfoundland musicians to visit.

<sup>280</sup> There are examples of Newfoundland musicians traveling to Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s but these have increased dramatically in the 2000s. This has to do with Creagh but also the MOU, economy, and ease of travel.

McNulty Family during their tour, there is no independent evidence of this and we can assume that the McNulty Family had limited interaction with Newfoundland musicians. Ryan's Fancy had a great deal of interaction with Newfoundland rural musicians through their television show, but the group itself included only Irish musicians. By the nature of being a solo musician, Creagh arguably interacted the most with other musicians as a member of Tickle Harbour, working with locals on his recordings and highlighting them on *Island to Island*.<sup>281</sup>

The way in which Irishness was constructed through music has varied throughout the time period covered by these case studies. The first striking musical difference between these groups is that the McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy were primarily song based groups whereas Séamus Creagh was a fiddler rather than singer. This is congruent in the changing nature of how Irishness has been constructed in Newfoundland. Except for studies of Rufus Guinchard and Emile Benoit, instrumental music has been, and arguably still is, a footnote to the song traditions in Newfoundland; but, during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century instrumental music became more prominent with a greater number of solo albums and attention paid to fiddlers and accordionists. As outlined in Chapter Seven, many of the active instrumentalists today came to learn non-Irish influenced Newfoundland music by first learning from Irish fiddle and accordion recordings. By the 1990s, Irish music as instrumental music was a firmly entrenched idea. The idea of instrumental music as Irish (Catholic) is also found elsewhere as noted by Stokes in Northern Ireland (1994, 9-10). Each of the case studies constructed Irishness in a

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<sup>281</sup> Fergus O'Byrne and Dermot O'Reilly obviously worked with a great number of local musicians after their time in Ryan's Fancy but that was not the focus of that case study.

different light. Ryan's Fancy and Séamus Creagh focused on the rural, working class persona of traditional musicians whereas the McNulty Family portrayed their Irish-American music as high-class New York glamour. The musician as "working" class has been the persona that has stuck with Newfoundland musicians into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>282</sup> Ryan's Fancy, through their television show, focused on the rural nature of Newfoundland traditions, and while the construction of these traditions as Irish was not always overt in the dialogue, it is clear from my interviews with Ryan and O'Byrne that they felt a kinship to Newfoundland that made them feel at home. Creagh's work was different again as he worked with Newfoundland musicians as equal collaborators and also as part of the Irish musical diaspora. As shown in these three case studies the construction of Irishness within Newfoundland musical senses of place has developed through the actions of the groups discussed and the interactions and resulting re-recording of their repertoire.

#### ***8.4 Newfoundland Irishness and Multilocality***

One might reasonably expect that this dissertation would focus on Ireland and Newfoundland as its two primary places of inquiry. To my initial surprise, New York became an important place to discuss as well. The over-all locations of this dissertation form a North Atlantic Irish musical triangle between Ireland, New York and Newfoundland.

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<sup>282</sup> The class implications of Irish and Newfoundland music is a topic I hope to explore further in future research. This persona was also encouraged throughout the wider North American and European folk revivals of the 1960s and 1970s. That said it is not quite as simple as working class vs. glamorous personas. For example Ryan's Fancy attracted a more university-educated audience while the Sons of Erin held the attention of working-class audiences in general.

The McNulty Family foregrounded Ireland in many of their repertoire selections, New York glamour in their costumes, and a mix of both in their marketing. With roots in Ireland they lived in New York and toured in Newfoundland where they adopted a few local songs and influenced the budding recording industry. Not only was Irish music partially revived by American recordings sent back to Ireland from the 1920s onwards, but New York was also a major location for the development of the 1960s and 1970s folk revivals. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century there were more social, media, and economic connections between Newfoundland and the eastern seaboard of the United States than with Ireland. Interestingly, Irish-American music itself seemed to create a link in the mind of the listener to Ireland rather than the United States. The eastern seaboard, sometimes called the Boston States, was a frequent location for Newfoundlanders to seek work. They often returned home with recordings and instruments. Many of the radio stations that played Irish music also could be heard in eastern Newfoundland. Thus, to Newfoundlanders, New York and Boston were synonymous, not only with employment, but with Irish music through recordings and radio.

I believe Irishness in Newfoundland has been based, until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, more on an *idea* and *evocation* of what Ireland and Irishness are imagined to be, than on a concrete, practical experiential knowledge. In part this was due to the difficulty of trans-Atlantic communication, travel expense and lack of economic traffic until the past few decades. Irishness in Newfoundland was also at least partially filtered through Irish-American media with musical groups such as the McNulty Family. In this way the idea



of Ireland in Newfoundland is imagined rather than known. Thus, Newfoundlanders have joined the international imagined community of Irish culture and music.

The members of Ryan's Fancy were Irish musicians who were accepted as Newfoundlanders, and upheld as ambassadors of Newfoundland music. They made a conscious effort to promote and foreground a sense of Newfoundland culture as unique, particularly in their television shows. They quickly learned local songs and recorded them alongside their Irish, Scottish and English repertoire. Some listeners, particularly those who were young at the time of hearing Ryan's Fancy, did not critically distinguish between local Newfoundland repertoire and songs from other locations, and arguably rolled their entire repertoire into an Irish-Newfoundland musical genre. The multilocality of Ryan's Fancy's TV productions worked to connect the rural outport repertoires of Newfoundland musicians to the larger international Irish folk revival and highlighted Newfoundland's uniqueness.

The *Island to Island* project coupled Irish and Newfoundland musicians directly. There was, however, an active selection of Newfoundland repertoire which went against the grain of standard Irish music. Despite the liner notes which claimed many similarities between Newfoundland and Irish music, many of the underlying musical choices were from locations in Newfoundland and Ireland which were unconnected historically and showed marked differences in structure. Several of the Newfoundland selections were chosen from rural areas which did not have a significant Irish influence historically (eg. the West Coast). Similar to Ryan's Fancy, coupling rural Newfoundland fiddle music with Irish music suggests Ireland as the music's cultural ancestor, even where this was historically inaccurate.

### ***8.5 Electronic Mass Media in the Creation of Irishness and Newfoundland Musical Senses of Place***

This dissertation has traced the influence of radio, television and recordings through three time periods, equating each with specific Irish musicians. Interestingly enough I found that the sphere of mass media influence somewhat decreased over the course of the case studies as the contact between musicians became more personal and local.

The McNultys' primary influence was felt through radio and secondarily through recordings and lastly personal contact. I would suggest, however, as previously mentioned, that due to the nature of radio and the announcer's on-air patter, many listeners felt a personal connection to the McNultys through this medium. Through the regularity of their radio play, the McNultys also "lived" in Newfoundland like Ryan's Fancy and Séamus Creagh. The McNultys had the least amount of two-way interaction with musicians in Newfoundland. They did, however, learn and record at least two Newfoundland songs, "When I Mowed Pat Murphy's Meadow" and "Star of Logy Bay." The latter was learned during their 1953 Newfoundland tour while the former was sent to them by J. M. Devine in 1949. Both of these songs were accepted as Irish by their regular, non-Newfoundland, audience but marked as Newfoundland songs by Newfoundlanders. This recognition of Newfoundland music by a famous group and their long Newfoundland radio tenure endeared them to Newfoundlanders in general. Unlike Ryan's Fancy and Séamus Creagh, they did not work actively to promote Newfoundland as a separate, but related, Irish place. To most of the world they presented an Irish-American persona that was not connected to Newfoundland.

Ryan's Fancy's most wide-reaching influence was felt through their national and international television series, *Ryan's Fancy*. Their other influences were through recordings and personal contact. Long-term personal relationships were particularly important with O'Byrne and O'Reilly as they both settled on the north-eastern Avalon and kept up busy local musical careers.<sup>283</sup> Ryan's Fancy centred their television interactions around the "folk" of Newfoundland when they travelled throughout the province filming and learning from musicians in the outports. Therefore, their local, national and international image became very much intertwined with Newfoundland. Not only did they present Newfoundland culture to Newfoundlanders but, through the television show, they created a musical sense of place for Newfoundland in the minds of Canadians and internationally. Ryan's Fancy was not the only influential Irish group during this time period. The Sons of Erin were, and still are, an important group which has provided a situation in which Newfoundland musicians can learn Irish music.

Despite occurring during the third revival, the most media-saturated transnational Irish revival of the 1990s and 2000s, Séamus Creagh's and Rob Murphy's influence were the least media-centred and widespread of the three Irish musician case studies. Their influence was the most personalized for local St. John's musicians. Séamus Creagh had a very different public profile from either Ryan's Fancy or the McNulty Family. Creagh came to live in Newfoundland as an individual musician; he performed with the local session band Tickle Harbour, recorded a solo CD here, and generally interacted in the musical life of the place. The *Island to Island* project was perhaps the most egalitarian of

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<sup>283</sup> These relationships were not addressed in detail in the chapter but will perhaps be the subject of future research.

the three sets of interactions between Irish and Newfoundland musicians. The McNultys simply recorded two songs and the fieldwork done by Ryan's Fancy was filtered through a sensitive producer and national television network. The *Island to Island* project, while produced by Creagh and Desplanques, presented both sets of musicians reasonably equally. With less than three thousand copies sold, the influence of the project, though important, was not widespread but centralized in the two regions of eastern Newfoundland and southwest Ireland. Creagh did, however, provide impetus for Newfoundland musicians to travel to Ireland and this strengthened a sense of musical connection for both Newfoundlanders and Irish visitors.

#### ***8.6 Electronic Mass Media and Place in Multiple Generations of Newfoundland Musicians***

Perhaps the best way to tie together the threads of this dissertation is to examine each of the time periods and glean what the impact was for each generation. This leads to an examination of how a new generation of early 21<sup>st</sup>-century Newfoundland musicians have negotiated ideas of place through mass media and in collaboration with Irish musicians. I divide the following section into three following the time periods outlined by the case studies, and use Turino's continuum (from participatory performance, to presentational, to high fidelity recordings) to examine some of the changes through time.

### ***8.6.1 Participatory Dance Music in Pre-Confederation and 1950s Newfoundland***

Prior to the late 1950s there was no marketable Newfoundland recording industry for traditional instrumentalists in the province. Traditional music was based in personal experience and only a few recordings of folksongs were available. For “fiddlers” this was the era of community dances where the musician was primarily functional in order to facilitate a group experience. These events correspond to Turino’s participatory definition in that there was “no artist-audience” delineation and “only participants or potential participants” (26). The dances were without question participatory, with a variety of levels of dancers, and everyone was expected to join in during the course of the evening. Musically however, this was a solo tradition that does not align with the musical aesthetics Turino outlines.<sup>284</sup>

Dance fiddlers tended to learn and perform in a family and community-based context. It is during this period that most of the Irish influence might have come through the passing down of tunes or songs from original Irish immigrants.<sup>285</sup>

Similar to Wilf Doyle’s recording of “Rollicking Skipper B” which had an unusual form (as noted in section 5.12.2), unaccompanied solo dance fiddlers tended towards individualization and short-cuts to help with stamina over a long night of playing rather than standardization. This often resulted in asymmetry when needed, non-standard pitch, little ornamentation, simple finger patterns, open string drones for volume and limited string crossings to conserve energy for extended performances. As the music was

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<sup>284</sup> I have explored an analysis of Turino’s theory as applied to Newfoundland dance music further in a paper given at the ICTM/CSTM world conference (Osborne 2011).

<sup>285</sup> There were influences from 19<sup>th</sup>-century broadsides and Tin Pan Alley songs. One assumes there was less media influence on instrumental music prior to radio.

functional and meant to suit the dancers on the floor in front of them, fiddlers were more likely to take liberties with meter, form and rhythm as rhythmic variation (e.g., syncopations or extra beats). I imagine that rhythmic change would facilitate more interesting footwork for a dancer than melodic change. With participatory dance music there was a clear sense of place for the music; it was local to the musician, community or region, particularly in the pre-TCH days when roads were lacking and island travel was difficult. During my MA research I found that tunes learned from radio were generally categorized as non-local by dance fiddlers and not appropriate for local dances, but this line became more blurred with the increase of recordings and decrease of dances.

#### ***8.6.2 Participatory to Presentational to High Fidelity: Mid-1960s through the Early 1980s***

The traditional music experience for Newfoundland musicians began to change during Wilf Doyle's career as a musician. Earlier I presented Wilf Doyle as a transitional figure from the participatory tradition to the presentational venues and high fidelity media. He began as a dance musician in Conception Harbour then started to play in bands, eventually moving into radio and recordings. Doyle's generation could be viewed as the pivot point which saw the move from participatory to presentational music in Newfoundland. During the community dance era the radio was introduced and had an influence on how musicians thought of music. As previously mentioned radio music was rarely adopted for local dances and constituted a separate category in a musician's repertoire (Osborne 2007, 192). As the dance tradition declined and there was less call for these events, fiddlers often began learning more pieces from the radio to play for

listening and enjoyment (ibid.). Doyle began performing during the McNulty Family's Newfoundland radio period and started his musical career as a dance fiddler who eventually moved to presentational music and then worked in the recording studio. Wilf Doyle is among those who can be credited with starting the instrumental high fidelity industry in Newfoundland.

The McNulty Family and Ryan's Fancy participated in both presentational and high fidelity musics in Newfoundland. The McNulty Family did a concert tour in 1953 and their music was available at the Big 6 until the 1970s. After Confederation, concert tours, including country and western and Irish musicians, increased as infrastructure was built throughout the province. In the 1960s, big name acts such as the Clancy Brothers and the Dubliners toured the island followed by the Irish Rovers, Sullivan's Gypsies, Sons of Erin and Ryan's Fancy, among others. Newfoundland musicians including Wilf Doyle, Harry Hibbs and musicians who played for *All Around the Circle* also took to the stage, radio, television and recording studio during this period.

In the 1970s stage performances and the recording industry were established and growing. Concerts and bar gigs were becoming the normal venues in which to see music, and Ryan's Fancy was a large part of this trend. Although based in St. John's, their television show provided a bridge to the rural community musics (song and dance music) by featuring documentary style interviews with various tradition-bearers around the province, thereby providing a large audience for traditions which were gradually becoming inactive. Groups such as Ryan's Fancy and Sons of Erin learned some local music and became quite well known for playing it alongside their Irish repertoire. Other bands such as Figgy Duff and Red Island focused on playing primarily Newfoundland

music. All of these bands modeled themselves and their ensemble arrangements after the Irish, American or English folk revivals of the time. Both Ryan's Fancy and Figgy Duff have been accepted as models of Newfoundland music-making in a band context and have influenced bands in the decades since they began. While Ryan's Fancy did keep the occasional asymmetry in the music that they learned locally the vast majority of their music was in standard "square" metres.

### ***8.6.3 Participatory Music-making, Presentational Music and High Fidelity: 1990s and Early 2000s***

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, participatory sessions, concerts and recordings are all part of a professional musician's life. Sessions generally fit the parameters of participatory music. Sessions are a major outlet for instrumental musicians and any musician is technically welcome to play. While many people do go to hear sessions without performing, the presentational aesthetic expectation is not the same as a concert hall. In sessions, the music stops and starts and there is no set format per se. Fairbairn suggests that sessions reinstitute the relaxed community feeling of house parties and dances before the 1930s in Ireland (1994, 597). If that is true then the music is vastly different from the music of the dance tradition as many of these players learned from Irish recordings. Many of the session players have had no contact with the original community dance hall environment and the sessions often rely on Irish repertoire although some "Newfoundland" tunes are occasionally included. Many of the musicians who attend sessions are professionals who earn their living in the presentational and high fidelity sectors through touring and recording.



For listening audiences of either concerts or recordings, arrangements of the music need to be made. This generally includes adding more instruments and interesting harmonies to delight the ears but while still keeping a solid beat which hearkens back to the original function of dancing. Increasingly, through the decades, more melodic variation has been added by instrumentalists such as finger ornamentation (rolls and grace notes), selective droning for listening interest rather than volume, and tune medleys. Interestingly, despite many players learning from standardized Irish sources, the asymmetry or “crookedness” of the Newfoundland dance tradition is now retained, not for the functional reasons of dancing but for auditory interest. This is also true of other purely presentational performers not involved in the *Island to Island* CD who do not “straighten” tunes and even added beats into tunes which are normally “square.” This presentational generation seems to be willing to experiment with the accepted standards for the sake of providing a more intriguing listening experience and an identifiable style marker for Newfoundland.

This research has drawn a complex picture around the issue of music, media and place. In Newfoundland, Irish music has sometimes been vilified by some members of the nationalistic Newfoundland folk revival as “cultural imperialism” but also praised as a vehicle for promoting Newfoundland musicians on the world stage. I argue that in contrast to a levelling effect, Irish musicians have actually helped promote Newfoundland music as unique and helped to contest Newfoundland music as essentially Irish. The *Ryan’s Fancy Show* highlighted rural Newfoundland culture to the world which went against the grain of the increasingly polished and mediated performances on network variety shows. This allowed Newfoundlanders to see traditional small-group folklore

performances from across the province and then hear how Ryan's Fancy reinterpreted that repertoire into a concert or recording format. Irish music has also helped Newfoundland musicians discover Newfoundland music and provide an international tradition with which to compare themselves. These musicians sought out new, high paced and internationally accepted Irish fiddle music as a way of distancing themselves from the Newfoundland music of their parents and through this route came back to Newfoundland music and now feel a part of both traditions. It could be said that during their sojourn into Irish music they put local repertoire aside to learn transnational material, but this trend was reversed after a certain point and their explorations of Irish music allowed them to embrace their local culture with a fuller understanding of its place in the world of western European based traditional musics. Many of these musicians have now played with world-renowned Irish musicians as well as Newfoundland instrumentalists. As Newfoundland musicians become a recognized part of the international imagined community of Irish music they are both adopting Irish music as their own and contesting a single perspective of Irishness as the centre of a Newfoundland musical sense of place. This contestation was clearly shown in the musical selections on the *Island to Island* CD as well as the variety of musics highlighted in the *Ryan's Fancy Show*. The contesting is often subtle and open to a fluid interpretation, as can be seen in the reviews of *Island to Island*, but will grow as Newfoundlanders continue to put the province on the map of the international traditional music scene.

### ***8.7 Future Research***

This research has left many questions only partially answered and raised many new areas of inquiry that could be followed up in the future. First, while research activities are expanding in the area of Newfoundland fiddle and accordion music, the number of researchers is very small. Although I believe the modern tradition is thriving in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the preservationist in me calls for more collection and publication of old dance tunes. This is perhaps the area in which the most work has been done, particularly by amateur collectors and professional musicians. I would encourage anyone interested in this area to continue their work.

This research is the first of its kind to examine the influences of specific Irish musicians on the construction of musical senses of place in the traditional music of Newfoundland and Labrador. By necessity I selected only three groups to focus on. However, there is room for more research regarding the interactions between Newfoundland musicians other resident Irish groups and musicians such as Chris Hennessey or the Sons of Erin and musicians who simply toured the province (Sullivan's Gypsies, Makem and Clancy, Irish Rovers, Paddy Keenan and many others). The McNulty Family has brought up all kinds of possibilities for future investigation; such as the impact of other prominent radio musicians like Irish-American accordionist John Kimmel. He was heard regularly by fiddler Kevin Broderick (1923-2008) in Bay de Verde, NB in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (2002). The McNultys also bring up the connections to the eastern seaboard of the US, an area which has not been examined from a musical exchange point of view. The McNultys also provided a very different class perspective

with their gowns and tuxedos than one sees in most traditional music acts, although the Chieftains have been known to don suits. The issue of class and gender is an area ripe for investigation. As previously mentioned there was a difference in both presentations of class between the eras of Irish-vaudeville and the 1970s Irish-folk revival as well as in the audiences for different groups. As for gender analysis, there is ample room for of research in this area. Ma McNulty was the face of the McNulty Family and was the top female Irish recording artist of her era. Even today there are more top male instrumentalists than women. The gendering of stage presence and instruments in the international folk music scene over time would be an interesting study.

Musical variety shows were an important genre of television in the 1960s and 1970s. There have been some studies done of Don Messer's Jubilee and other individual shows, however, there is plenty of room for both individual studies and a larger investigation into the phenomenon as a whole (Allan 1996c; Cole 2002; Dick 2004; Rosenberg 1996, 2002b). Such a study could examine television variety shows' role in the construction of national identity, promoting or privileging particular local styles and how these shows represented Canada internationally.

I deliberately did not delve deeply into the Newfoundland nationalistic cultural revival movement of the 1970s as I felt it could be a dissertation unto itself. To date very little attention has been paid to the culture of this era and its relation to musical politics. One exception is Saugeres' thesis on Figgy Duff and in a few autobiographical accounts by artists (Brookes 1988; M. Doyle 2005; Saugeres 1991). In this vein, far more work could be done to examine the influence of international folk revivals on Newfoundland music. The most recent "Celtic" revival occurred alongside a new ease of producing

recordings which allowed for the musical expression and contribution of many amateur musicians who might not otherwise produce an album. An exploration of this rise in output could reveal interesting trends in Newfoundland musical senses of place. A most interesting study would be of the evolving constructions of Newfoundland music through the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival which began in 1976.

### ***8.8 Significance and Impact of this Research***

This dissertation has filled a significant gap in the literature on Newfoundland traditional music by examining in detail the interaction of Irish musicians and music with the Newfoundland tradition. This research helps understand how the electronic mass media has influenced commercialized traditional musics during the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It shines a critical light on the common perception of Newfoundland music as essentially Irish. My contribution is to nuance this assumption which has not been examined extensively in the scholarly context. As suggested by Erlman's quote in the introduction of this work, it is between the overall assumptions about culture and their negotiation in the subtleties of local musical practices that a deeper, more complex understanding can be found. This research has examined Irish music as part of Newfoundland musical senses of place.

My findings show that Irish music and musicians have had a major influence but that it is not solely a one-way communication. There is in fact quite a bit of contestation within the realm of Irish-Newfoundland musical forms which both connect Newfoundland to Ireland *and* construct Newfoundland's own multiple musical senses of place as autonomous. Interestingly, this musical subversion has been propelled by both

Newfoundland and Irish musicians. Even more interesting is that these same musicians often verbally discuss the similarities between Newfoundland and Ireland at the same time as performing the musical subversion of this rhetoric.

This research has deepened the understanding of the ancestral and media make-up of the Newfoundland repertoire. Irish music does comprise a large section of the Newfoundland repertoire but it is not *all* passed down from early immigrants. Quite a lot of the Irish music performed in Newfoundland has been learned through media sources and personal contact with Irish musicians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I hope this research will be well-received by my participants and other Newfoundland musicians as a positive call to recognize the complexity and “multilocality” of Newfoundland musics. I hope that musicians will realize that Newfoundland music can be indebted to the music of the British Isles, France and Ireland and yet stand as its own tradition at the same time. This research demonstrates that the Newfoundland tradition is complex. This recognition opens up space for 21<sup>st</sup>-century traditional musicians to positively construct a world class, multifaceted, multilocational and multivocal Newfoundland musical sense of place.

**Appendix One: Biographies of Major Consultants in Case Studies**

***Carrigan, Colin*** – (b.1972; fiddle) is a Newfoundland fiddle player, luthier and architect from St. John's. As a child he studied with Kelly Russell. Carrigan has toured in Canada, Ireland and England.

***Coffey, Aidan*** – (b. 1962; accordion) is an accordionist from Cork, Ireland who has played with many prominent musicians including Irish fiddlers Séamus Creagh and Frankie Gavin. Coffey was a member of the highly regarded Irish musical group DeDannan. He holds a doctorate in microbiology.

***Daly, Mick*** – (b. 1950; guitar, banjo) is a guitarist and banjo player from Cork who plays bluegrass as well as Irish tunes. He has been a member of the Lee Valley String Band for over 40 years and has played in several Irish bands. He is retired from his career as a sound engineer, except for projects of personal interest.

***Keane, James*** – (b. 1948) (accordion) is particularly interesting regarding his involvement with both the rise of the Dublin revival scene and the New York Irish scene in the late 1960s. Keane grew up in a well-known musical house in Dublin. His parents regularly welcomed travelling Irish musicians and provided a space to visit, eat and play music at a time when Irish music was not a public event. According to James, he and his brother Sean, who became the fiddle player for the Chieftains, were often bullied by school mates for playing "peasant music" (Keane 2010). At age fourteen, Keane was

invited to play on a concert with Pete Seeger and the McPeakes. After this Keane and friends formed the popular Castle Ceili Band. In 1967, Keane moved to New York and in 1979 he moved to Nova Scotia to be a part of Ryan's Fancy for their *Canadian Express* and *Heritage* series' as well as the television specials. At the announcement of the breakup of Ryan's Fancy in 1982, he moved back to New York where his career took off and he was approached by two different accordion companies to make accordions specifically to his specifications (ibid.). Today he is an internationally recognized Irish accordionist.

**McNulty, Ann (Ma)** – (1887-1970) “Ma” McNulty was born Ann Bridget Burke as the eighth of nine children, to Abby Hanley and Patsy Burke, in Cloonmurly, Kiltewan, Co. Roscommon, Ireland on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1887 (L. Byrne ca. 2007; Grogan 2010b).<sup>286</sup> Ann Burke was a musical child and was often asked to play or sing for “local house dances and social gatherings” (Coyne 2000, 95). At age 19 she gave her first public performance with a short spoken piece and dance accompaniment on accordion for Maggie Brennan at the Kiltewan National School (ibid.). This show then toured the region by boat (ibid.). Brennan complimented Ann's accompaniment saying that, “a person with only one foot could dance to music like that” (ibid.). After failing to secure a position as a teacher in the national school Ann decided to go to America (ibid.).

In the autumn of 1910 Ann Burke immigrated to the United States. She left Cobh, Co. Cork, Ireland on the S.S *Oceanic* from Queenstown on October 20 arriving at

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<sup>286</sup> The Burke family consisted of seven daughters and two sons whose birth dates ranged from 1872-1889. One sister lived only ten months. She died nine months before Ann was born (Grogan 2010b)



Ellis Island on October 26 (Grogan 2010b). After visiting her sister in New York, Ann moved to Massachusetts where she met her future husband John McNulty (1887-1928) who hailed from Drumkeeran, Co. Leitrim, Ireland (L. Byrne ca. 2007; Grogan 2010b).<sup>287</sup> Ann and John were married on April 20, 1914 and had two children Eileen (b.1915) and Peter (b.1917) (Coyne 2000, 97; Grogan 2010b). Unfortunately, John died of lung cancer in 1928 when the children were just 9 and 13 years old (P. Byrne 1991, 62; Grogan 2010f).<sup>288</sup> The family lived in Hastings, New York and it is unclear exactly when they moved into Manhattan.<sup>289</sup> Ann McNulty never returned to Ireland and died in 1970; she was 82. She outlived her son Peter who died at age 43 in 1960.

**McNulty, Eileen** – (1915-1989) Ann's daughter, Eileen McNulty married John Grogan in 1937.<sup>290</sup> Grogan held the position of the mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey for 12 years and together they had two children, Patricia and Jim (Coyne 2000, 97-98; Grogan 2010f). Eileen visited Ireland in 1954 and again in 1971 to qualify as an Irish dance teacher (McNulty-Grogan 1975). Eileen passed away in 1989.

**McNulty, Peter** – (1917-1960) Ann's son, Peter served overseas in WWII and was known to be in Belgium (Grogan 2010f; McNulty 1943). He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and received a Bronze Star for valour (Grogan 2010b). He also performed along with a

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<sup>287</sup> John McNulty emigrated through Boston Harbour in 1911, exact date unknown. Upon arrival Ann went to visit her older sister Elizabeth who lived at 73 Broadway. (Grogan 2010b)

<sup>288</sup> There exists with the family papers the parish list of deaths for that year which puts John's death as December 13, 1928.

<sup>289</sup> Coyne states that they moved into NYC in 192[8] after John's death and that they started performing to provide for the family (2000, 95). An interview with Eileen McNulty-Grogan reveals that they were performing prior to her father's death (McNulty-Grogan 1975).

<sup>290</sup> Eileen died in 1989 at the age of 79 (Grogan 2010f).

few other soldiers who collectively called themselves The Foxhole Filharmonics. They performed in “bombed out buildings, caves, hospitals and knee deep in snow” (Grogan 2010a). In the McNulty Family group Peter played violin, sang and danced. He passed away in 1960 due to lung cancer.

***Paddy Mackey*** – (bodhran, accordion) St. John’s, NL. Mackey is a bodhran craftsman which he produces through his company Black Dog Bodhrans. He has played with Tickle Harbour and Jeezus Murphy.

***O’Byrne, Fergus*** – (b. 1947) (singer, banjo, bodhran, guitar, concertina) was born in Dublin. Unlike Ryan, O’Byrne states that he did not come from a “traditional” Irish family (2010). His parents gave him classical piano lessons at age seven and he studied piano intensely until he was fourteen, completing Trinity College exams (ibid.). At fourteen, his schoolwork was suffering and his parents stopped his piano lessons (ibid.). O’Byrne explained it was not piano interfering in his studies, but like any teenager, he was more “interested in music and sports” than schoolwork (ibid.). The teenage O’Byrne started “fooling around” with his brother’s guitar and mandolin and listening to Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, the Clancy Brothers, The Dubliners as well as the Beatles (ibid.). Later, O’Byrne was deeply influenced by the English music revival including Steeleye Span, the Watsons and Martin Carthy (ibid.).

At the age of nineteen, he decided to come to Canada to seek clerical work. Similar to Ryan, in Canada O’Byrne was quickly brought into the music scene (ibid.). In

Toronto he became a member of The Sons of Erin, O'Reilly's Men, Sullivan's Gypsies and finally Ryan's Fancy.

When Ryan's Fancy ended, O'Byrne went back to school, got a degree in education and worked as a teacher in the Newfoundland and Labrador school system for a time (ibid.). In the 1990s, O'Byrne started working with Jim Payne and A Crowd of Bold Sharemen. He continued to play some gigs with friend Dermot O'Reilly but they never revisited the Ryan's Fancy name (ibid.). With Payne, O'Byrne has been delving deeply into the English connections with Newfoundland. In the summer of 2010 he was part of a CD release titled *Shore to Shore* (2010), a collaborative CD between the Wren Project in England and Newfoundland musicians. O'Byrne has become a driving force behind folk music education in the province and regularly tours the schools with Jim Payne and hosts the Young Folk at the Hall.

***O'Brien, Ralph*** – founder of the Sons of Erin and owner of Erin's Pub. He moved to Newfoundland from Ireland via Toronto in the 1970s.

***O'Reilly, Dermot*** – (1942 - 2007) (singer, guitar) was born in Dublin, Ireland and grew up loving rock-and-roll, in particular Buddy Holly. He played in the Tara Folk group in Dulbin in the 1960s and in 1968 he moved to Hamilton, Ontario where he began driving a coffee truck (D. O'Reilly 2004; Ryan 2010). Soon afterwards he was invited to play with Irish musicians in Toronto and moved to the city to pursue a music career; a career he maintained for the remainder of his life. After Ryan's Fancy broke up in 1983, Dermot continued to perform, record, and maintain a recording studio in Torbay, Newfoundland.

His death in February 2007 deeply saddened the community and he is still remembered annually at Erin's Pub on Water Street on his birthday. There is a student scholarship for leadership in traditional music made available at Memorial in his name.

**Ryan, Denis** – (singer, tin whistle, fiddle) was born into a family of five children on a farm near Newport, County Tipperary, Ireland (see Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). Denis states that he “grew up in a tradition of house dances” which often went all night. His parents sometimes went straight from the dance to “milking the cows in the morning” (ibid.). Ryan's siblings were musical, as was their father, who was a good accordion player and singer (ibid.). The primary school in the village promoted music through a tin whistle band and a separate pipe band. While the pipe band had a longer reputation at the school, having been started in the early 1900s, Ryan credits the tin whistle band as his inspiration (ibid.). He played some fiddle as well as tin whistle and won singing competitions as a teenager but then did not sing on stage until he moved to Canada (ibid.). Ryan conveyed to folklorist Peter Narváez, the romantic notion that in his youth “the country side just bubbled with music... it was a natural thing, you never realized to look into it, you were so much inside it yourself, you were part of it...” (ibid.). Perhaps this is why he felt so at home in Newfoundland, as it reminded him of his rural upbringing. As a young adult Ryan lived in Dublin for a few years working at various jobs: the civil service, a car dealership and other office jobs. During this time, he was part of the “electrifying” music scene of mid-60s Dublin (ibid.). In 1969, he came to Canada with the idea of going into medicine (ibid.). In Toronto, Ryan became part of the local Irish music revival and he performed with The Sons of Erin and then Sullivan's

Gypsies (ibid.). When Ryan's Fancy moved to Newfoundland he took biology and chemistry courses at Memorial University but eventually did a degree in folklore (see O'Byrne 2010; Narváez 1976, MUNFLA 79-591). When Ryan's Fancy dissolved in 1982, Ryan moved to Nova Scotia and went into finance.

**Sutton, Billy** – (b. 1972) is from Harbour Grace, Conception Bay, started traditional music in his late teens after playing a variety of rock and roll instruments. A multi-instrumentalist, he plays fiddle, banjo, guitar, and accordion. He plays banjo on the *Island to Island* recording. Sutton has toured extensively with The Fables and has been a session musician on several recordings and produced others.

**Wells, Graham** – (b. 1980) started accordion at the age of 6 having been inspired by his grandfather. He released his first solo album in May 2008 and has played with various groups including Connemara, the St. Pat's Dancers, A Crowd of Bold Sharemen and The Irish Descendants. He is a core player in the downtown session scene and hosts sessions regularly.

**Whelan, Jason** – (b. 1973) a bouzouki and guitar player has played in various bands including The Roger Howse Band, Connemara, The Plankerdown Band and The Punters. He is a sound engineer and owns Sound Solutions Studios in St. John's.

**Appendix Two: List of Musical Groups Cited in Text**

***A Crowd of Bold Sharemen*** – Newfoundland, 1990s- present

***All Around the Circle*** – Newfoundland television show 1960s-1970s

***Altan*** – Ireland, 1980s -present

***Auntie Crae Band*** – Newfoundland, 2000s-present

***Bothy Band*** – Ireland, 1970s

***Carleton Showband*** – Canada, 1964-1996, *Pig and Whistle Show*

***Celtic Connection*** – Newfoundland 1990s-present

***Chieftains, The*** – Ireland, 1960s-present

***Clancy Brothers*** – Ireland and USA, 1960s

***Connemara*** – Newfoundland, 1990s

***Corries, The*** – Scotland, 1950s

***DeDannan*** – Ireland, 1975-present

***Dublin Ramblers, The*** – Original name of the Sons of Erin

***Dubliners, The*** – Ireland, 1960s-present

***Fairport Convention*** – England, 1970s

***Farmaires*** – Newfoundland, 1949

***Figgy Duff*** – Newfoundland 1970s-1990s

***Flannigan Brothers*** – USA, 1920s-1930s

***Foster and Allen*** – Ireland, 1970s-present

***Great Big Sea*** – Newfoundland, 1990s-present

***Happy Valley Boys*** – Newfoundland, 1960s

***Irish Descendants*** – Newfoundland, 1990s -present

***Johnstons, The*** – Dublin, 1960s

***McNulty Family, The*** – New York, 1920s-1960s

***McPeake Family, The*** – Dublin, 1960s

***Mahersbars*** – Newfoundland, 2000s

***Makem and Clancy*** – USA, 1960s-1970s

***Mickey Duggan and the Barn Dance*** – St. John's, NL, 1940s, Radio Show

***Mummers Troupe*** – Newfoundland Theatre Group, 1970s

***Parnells, The*** – Dublin, 1960s

***Plankerdown Band*** - Newfoundland, 1990s

***Punters, The*** – Newfoundland, 1990s-present

***Rawlins Cross*** – Newfoundland, 1980s-1990s

***Red Island*** – Newfoundland, 1970s

***Ryan's Fancy*** – Newfoundland, 1970s-1980s

***Shamrocks, The*** – Newfoundland, 1950s

***Shanneyganock*** – Newfoundland, 1990s-2000s

***Simani*** – Newfoundland, 1970s-2000s

***Snotty Var*** – Newfoundland, instrumental group, recorded CD of same name, 1990-2000s

***Steeleye Span*** – English folk group 1970s

***Sons of Erin*** – Toronto and Newfoundland, 1970s-present

***Sullivan's Gypsies*** – Toronto, 1960s-1970s

***Tara Folk Group*** –Dublin, 1960s

***Tickle Harbour*** – Newfoundland, instrumental Irish-Newfoundland group, 1980s-2000s

***Wilf Doyle Orchestra*** – The Orchestra went through several name changes including The Doyle Brothers, Doyle's Orchestra, Wilf Doyle and the Blue Hill Ranch Boys and the Doyle Tones. For more information please see Wilf, Doyle.

***Wonderful Grand Band*** – Newfoundland, musical comedy act, late 1970s-1990s



**Appendix Three: List of Musical Venues Cited in Text**

***Arts and Culture Centres*** – series of government-run concert halls throughout Newfoundland and Labrador

***Black Knight Lounge*** – Halifax, NS, 1970s

***Bridie Molloy's*** – St. John's, NL, George Street

***Bridgett's Pub*** – St. John's, NL, Cookstown Road, ca. 1974-1990s

***Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)*** – Brooklyn, New York

***Causeway Motel*** – Twillingate, NL

***Donovan's Hall*** – Irish Ballroom in New York, 59<sup>th</sup> Street, 1940s

***Duke of Duckworth*** – St. John's, NL

***Embankment, The*** – Dublin, 1960s

***Erin's Pub*** – St. John's, owner Ralph O'Brien, founder of Sons of Erin

***Gander Hotel*** – Gander, NL

***Georgetown Pub*** – St. John's

***Hamilton Irish Club*** – Hamilton, Ontario

***Hotel Newfoundland*** – This hotel has changed hands several times in the last two decades, it is now under the Sheraton Hotel Group. It is still known locally as the Hotel Newfoundland or the Newfoundland Hotel.

***Liberty Hall*** – Dublin, 1960s

***Nautical Nellies*** – St. John's, NL, Water Street

***O'Reilly's Irish-Newfoundland Bar*** – St. John's, NL, George Street

***Old Sheeling*** – Dublin, 1960s

***Ovens Pub*** – Cork, Ireland

***Palace Theatre*** – New York, 1920s-1940s

***Parnell House, The*** – Dublin, 1960s

***Pitts Memorial Hall*** – St. John's, NL

***Rockaway Beach*** – Queens, NY

***Shamrock City*** – St. John's, NL, Water Street

***Ship Pub/Inn, The*** – St. John's, NL

***Strand, The*** – St. John's, NL, 1970s-1980s, Avalon Mall

***Windsor House, The*** – Toronto, 1960s-continuing. Owned by Jimmy McVeigh

#### **Appendix Four: McNulty Repertoire and Analysis**

This list was compiled from several sources including discographies assembled by Ted McGraw (2010b, 2010c), Pat Byrne, Monty Barfoot and official published discographies of Ruppli (1996) and Spottswood (1990). The subsequent analysis of cover versions was done with the help of the MUNFLA Song Title Index and the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Discography (2009, np).

Song Title	Label	Big 6 (April 1953)	MUNFLA SONG TITLE INDEX	1950- 1959	1960s- 1969	1970- 1979	1980- 1989	1990- 1999	2000- 2010	Total Big 6	Total other
Along the Rocky Road to Dublin	Copley										
Amber Tresses tied in Blue	Decca	yes						1		1	
Ann Carawath (Stack of Wheat)	Standard/ Colonial										
Around Our Old Cottage Home in Old Ireland		yes									
At the Close of an Irish Day	Copley	yes	1 (1978)								
At the Close of an Irish Day	Coral	yes									
At the Close of an Irish Day	Decca	yes			1			1		2	
Auld Skillara Hat	Standard/ Colonial			1							1
Auld Sunday Dinner, The		yes	1 (1967)				1		2	3	
Back to Donegal	Coral										

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
Back to Donegal	Decca	yes									
Barney Brannigan	Decca	yes				1				1	
Barney O'Hare		yes									
Bedelia	Standard/ Colonial										
Biddy Donahue	Decca					1			1	2	
Blackberry Blossom/Rattigans Fancy	Decca										
Boys From the Co. Armagh	Copley										
Boys of Co. Cork	Copley	yes									
Boys of the County Cork, The	Decca	yes			1				1	2	
Breakfast in Bed on Sunday Morning	Copley										
Brian Oge		yes									
Chasin' the Chicken (geese in the bog)/Maid on the Green (Auntie Mary/Cock of the North)	Decca			1	1	6	6	17	15		46
Christmas in Exile	Decca	yes									
Come in Out of the Rain	Decca	yes									
Cottage with the Horseshoe o'er the door		yes									
Daisy Bell	Decca	yes						1		1	
Darling Girl from Clare	Copley										
Dawning of the Morning, The	Decca	yes									

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
Denny McCall	Decca	yes									
Dora My Darling	Standard/ Colonial										
Drum Colliher	Decca	yes									
Dunloe Fair	Decca	yes									
Eileen	Decca	yes		1						1	
Eileen	Decca	yes									
Eileen McMahon	Decca	yes	1 (1973)				1		2	4	
Erin's Green Shore	Copley		4 (1966-1968)								4
Erin's Green Shore	Coral										
Erin's Green Shore	Decca	yes				1	1			2	
Exile of Cork	Copley										
Fair Roscommon Polka	Copley					3		11	11		24
Fair Sligo I Must Leave		yes									
Far Away in Australia	Coral		2 (1971,1978)								
Far Away in Australia	Decca	yes			1	5			5	11	
Flower of Sweet Strabane	Standard/ Colonial								2		2
Foggy Dew, The	Coral	yes	1 (1974)								
Foggy Dew, The	Decca	yes			2			2	2	6	
Galway Rogue, The	Decca	yes									
Garryowen/Three Little drummers	Decca										
Golden Jubilee, The	Decca	yes			2	2		3	7	14	
Goodbye Johnny Dear	Decca	yes									
Goodbye, I'm on My Way to Dear Old Dublin Bay	Copley										
Grandfather Brian	Decca	Yes									

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
Grave of Peter Crowley, The		yes				1	2	1	2	6	
Green on the Green	Standard/ Colonial										
Groves of Kiltteevan, The	Decca	yes									
Half-Door, The	Decca	yes			1	2	1	4	3	11	
Haste to the Wedding	Coral	yes									
Haste to the Wedding	Decca	yes			1	1		3	5	10	
Hat My Father Wore on St. Patrick's Day	Copley		1 (1978)								
Highland Mary	Decca	yes	1 (1971)								
Hills of Donegal, The	Decca										
Hills of Glenswilly	Coral	yes									
Hills of Glenswilly	Coral	yes									
Hills of Glenswilly	Decca	yes							1	1	
Hills of Knock-na-Shee	Copley										
Homes of Donegal	Copley										
I Don't Care If I Do	Copley										
I Don't Care If I Do	Decca	yes	2 (1978)	1		1				2	
I Don't Work For a Living	Decca	yes						1		1	
I Have a Bonnet Trimmed in Blue								1	2	3	
I Never Loved Anyone but You	Decca	yes									
I'd Sing Like a Thrush	Decca										
If You Ever Go Over	Decca			1	1				3		5
I'll Forgive and Try to Forget	Decca	yes			1			1	5	7	

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
I'm Sighing Tonight for Killarney	Decca	yes									
In Old Ballymoe	Decca	yes							1	1	
Ireland boys, Hurrah!	Decca	yes									
Irish Greens and Bacon	Decca										
Irish Greeting, An		yes									
Irish Rover, The	Copley				2	4	1	10	4		21
Irish Soldier Boy	Coral										
Irish Soldier Boy	Decca	yes				2	2		1	5	
It's Nice to Get Up in the Morning	Copley										
Jackets Green	Copley										
John Mitchell	Copley		1 (1978)								
John Mitchell	Decca	yes									
Kelly the Boy from Killan Grove	Decca	yes			2	3	1		2	8	
Kellys, The	Decca	yes				1					
Kerry Long Ago	Decca	yes	1 (1964)								
Kevin Barry		yes			1	1	1		2	5	
Kielrow-"Ma" McNulty's Favourite (tune)	Decca	yes									
Kielrow, "Ma" McNulty's Favourite (tune)	Coral	yes									
Knock at my Window Tonight	Decca	yes					1	1		2	
Leather Away With the Wattle O' Polka	Copley										
Let Mr. Maguire Sit Down	Copley										

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
Let Mr. McGuire Sit Down	Decca	yes					1			1	
Let Ye All Be Irish Tonight	Decca	yes									
Lightning Express		yes	1 (1978)								
Likable Lovable Leitrim Lad	Copley										
Likable Lovable Leitrim Lad	Standard/ Colonial										
Limerick Races, The	Coral	yes									
Limerick races, The	Decca	yes				1	1	1	1	4	
Little House Under the Hill, The	Decca	yes									
Maggie in the woods/ I Have a Bonnet Trimmed in Blue	Decca				1	8	8	13	31		61
Maid of the Sweet Brown Knowe, The	Decca	yes	1 (1973)								
Master McGraw	Decca										
McDonnell Old Tin Roof	Decca	yes									
McNamara from Mayo	Copley										
McNamara from Mayo	Standard/ Colonial										
McNulty's Irish Showboat	Copley	yes									
McNulty's Irish Showboat	Coral										
McNulty's Irish Showboat	Decca	yes									
Merry Ploughboy											
Mickey Hickey's Band	Decca	yes									



Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
Miss Drury's Reel/The Flowery Dell	Decca										
Miss Fogarty's Christmas Cake	Copley	yes									
Miss Fogarty's Christmas Cake	Coral	yes									
Miss Fogarty's Christmas Cake	Decca	yes							1	1	
Miss McCloud's Reel	Decca	yes				1		1		2	
Molly Bawn	Decca	yes	3 (1976,1978)	2		2	3	13	12	32	
Moon Behind the Hill	Decca										
Moriarty the Happy Cop	Decca	yes									
Mother Malone	Copley										
Mother Malone	Decca	yes			1	3		1	5	10	
Mother's Lament, A	Decca	yes							2	2	
Mother's Love is a Blessing, A	Decca	yes	2 (1973,1978)		1	1	1	8	7	18	
Mother's Love is a Blessing, A	Copley										
Mother's Silver Curl	Decca	yes									
My Beauty of Limerick	Decca	yes				1				1	
My Charming Nell McCoy	Copley										
My Own Dear Galway Bay	Coral	yes									
My Own Dear Galway Bay (Fahy)	Decca	yes	1 (1978)		2			3	7	12	

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
My Sweetheart		yes									
O Son Remember My Love Tonight	Decca	yes									
O'Bryan has No Place To Go	Decca	yes		1	1	1		1	1	5	
Off to Philadelphia	Standard/ Colonial						1			1	
Old House Far Away, The	Decca	yes									
Old Potato Cake, The	Decca	yes									
Over the Hills and Far Away	Decca	yes				1	2		3	6	
Pat Murphy's Meadow	Standard/ Colonia	yes					2	8	10	20	
Philip O'Beirne's Delight (tune?)		yes									
Polly O' the Automat	Decca	yes									
Queenstown Harbour	Copley										
Real Old Mountain Dew, The	Decca	yes		1			1			2	
Richard Breenan's Favourite (tune?)		yes									
River Meadow Reel/ Rolling Rocks of Glan	Decca										
River Moy, The	Decca	yes									
Roamin' in the Gloamin'	Copley					1	1				2
Rollicking Skipper (tune), The	Decca	yes			2	1	5	9	12	29	
Rose of Aranmore, The	Coral										
Rose of Aranmore, The	Decca	yes	1 (1973)	1	1		1	1	1	6	

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
Shall My Soul Pass Through Ireland	Decca	yes		1			1			2	
Shamus O'Brien	Decca	yes		1		1	1		2	5	
She Lived Beside the Anner		yes									
Ship that Never Returned		yes	1 (1978)	1	1	1	1	1		5	
Slippin' the Jig (tune)	Decca	yes		1						1	
Someone's Waiting for Me Back in Ireland	Copley										
Somewhere in Ireland	Standard/ Colonial							1	1		2
Song of the 32 counties	Decca	yes									
Stack of Barley	Coral	yes									
Stack of Barley	Decca	yes			1	5	1	3	2	12	
Stack of Wheat Hornpipe	Copley										
Star of Logie [sic] Bay, The	Copley			4	4	16	6	15	15		60
Star of the County Down	Decca										
Stone Outside Dan Murphy's Door, The	Decca	yes			1			2	4	7	
Susie O'Malley	Copley										
Susie O'Malley	Decca	yes						2	1	3	
Tell Her I Am (tune?)		yes									
There's A Sweetheart Waiting for You	Copley	yes									
There's a sweetheart Waiting for You	Decca	yes									

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total	Total
They sailed away from Dublin	Decca	yes									
They Sailed Away from Dublin Bay	Copley	yes									
Thief of the World, The	Decca	yes									
Three Leaf Shamrock from Glenore	Standard/Colonial							1	1		2
Tipperary Daisy	Copley	yes									
Tipperary Daisy	Coral	yes									
Tipperary Daisy	Decca	yes									
Toast to the 32 Counties	Copley										
Walker Walked Away	Decca	yes									
Waltz Me Around Again, Willie	Decca	yes									
We'll Take You Back to Ireland	Copley	yes									
We'll Take You Back to Ireland	Coral	yes									
We'll Take You Back to Ireland	Decca	yes									
When I Met MacKay	Copley										
When it's Teatime in the Meadows	Decca	yes									
When Rafferty Brought the Rumba	Decca										
When You Look in the Heart of a Shamrock	Copley										

Song Title	Label	Big 6	Munfla	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total Big 6	Total Other
When You're Winging Your Way to Old Ireland	Copley										
Total times recorded			26	17	33	79	55	142	198	298	229
Total songs			18	14	24	31	28	33	42	50	12

**Appendix Five: Ryan's Fancy (RF) and Sullivan's Gypsies (SG) Repertoire List and Analysis**

This discography was compiled using the MUNFLA Song Title Index and the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Discography.

Song Title	Date Re-corded	Re-corded before RF/SG	Re-corded after RF/SG	Intro RF/SG	Songs present before RF/SG	MUN-FLA	no date	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2010
As I Roved Out	1982												
As I Roved Out	1969	1	8		9			1				4	4
Badin Phelim	1969												
Ban Cunic Eireann O	1982												
Banks of Sicliy	1972		1	1									1
Beginning, The	1971		1	1									1
Biddy McGraw	1970												
Biddy Mulligan	1981												
Bluenose, The	1979		2	2								2	
Bold O'Donoghue	1973		2	2							1		1
Boston Burglar	1977	6	20		26	13 (1966-1979)		1			3	5	5

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Pre- sent before	Mun- fla	No date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Bound Down for Nfld.	1970		3	3							1	2	1
Brand New Song	1977		3	3								2	1
Bridgid Flynn	1982		1	1									1
Butcher Boy	1973	4	15		19	11 (1968-1978)				2		5	1
By the Bright Silvery Light of the Moon	1971		6	6		1 (1974)	1					1	3
Candlelight and Wine	1981		11	11								3	8
Cape Breton Dream	1977		1	1								1	
Cape Breton Lullaby	1972	3	3		6				2	1	1		2
Carrick Fergus	1972		2	2								1	1
Chastity Belt	1975												
Chieftains Welcome	1972												
Children's Winter, A	1971		8	8								2	6
Cliffs of Baccalieu	1979	10	21		31		2		2	6	1	6	14
Coal Town Road	1979		4	4								1	3

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Pre- sent Before	Mun- fla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Cock of the North	1971	2	17		19	1 (1973)		1	1	4	3	8	9
Come by the Hills	1971		14	14						2	2	5	5
Connemara By the Lake	1972		2			1 (1973)							1
Cross on the Spancill Hill, The	1982												
Cully Set Tune, The	1975												
Curragh of Kildare, The	1982												
Curragh of Kildare, The	1971		1	1									1
Danny Boy	1979	3	20		23	1 (1973)			1	1	1	7	12
Danny Boy	1969												
Dark Island	1981												
Dark Island	1971		4	4							1		2
Delaney's Donkey	1972												
Drunken Sailor	1977		13	13			1				2	6	4
Dublin in the Rare Old Times	1982		4	4							2	2	1
Every time	1971		2	2									2



Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Pre- sent Before	Mun- fla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Far Away in Australia	1975	2	9		11	1 (1978)			1	2		2	5
Fare Thee Well Enniskillen	1973		2	2						1			1
Farewell to Carlingford	1973		2	2									2
Farewell to Nova Scotia	1971		18	18		1 (1972)	2			3	2	7	3
Farewell to Nova Scotia	1973												
Fella From Fortune	1981	18	20		38	2(1964, 1978)	1	3	3	9	4	4	12
Finnegan's Wake	1973	3	11		14	2 (1967, 1970)			1			2	9
Fish and chips	1982												
Flower of Sweet Strabane, The	1971												
Gallant Forty Twa	1973		1	1						1			
Galway City	1972		5	5							1	2	2
Galway Shawl, The	1982		12	12								7	5
German Clock Winder	1971		2	2								2	

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Glimpse of Heaven	1977		1	1									1
Goodbye Mick	1971		5	5								2	3
Greenland Whale Fisheries, The	1971		12	12						1		3	8
Harbour Lecou	1975		10	10		1 (1978)				1	1		7
Haul 'er Away	1975												
Home Boys Home	1972		23	23							5	13	5
Hornpipes (The Wicklow and Off to California)	1979												
I followed her Into the West	1977												
I followed her into the west	1971												
I'm a Rover	1973		10	10							2	2	6
Intro	1971												
Intro	1973												
Irish Miner, The	1970												
I'se Da Bye	1971	12	101		113	5 (1964-1978)		4	7	23	12	31	31

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
I'se Da Bye	1973												
Island Song, The	1981		1	1									1
Jacky Tar	1979		1	1							1		
Jigs (O'Connell's Welcome to Dublin, The Portroe and the Mooncoin)	1979												
Johnny I hardly Knew Ye	1977		3	3								3	
Kerry Slides	1979												
Lark in the Morning	1975		6	6								1	5
Last Night I had the Strangest Dream	1973		1	1		1 (1978)							
Leaving London	1973		4	4							1		3
Leprechaun, The	1969		2	2								1	1
Lesson Too Late for the Learning, A	1971		1	1									1

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's	1975	13	48		61	2 (1970, 1978)		3	7	8	4	18	23
Life of the Country Boy	1979		1	1									1
Looking Back	1972		1	1								1	
Love Song	1972												
Manchester Rambler	1971												
Mingulay Boat Song, The	1970											3	2
Minstrel Boy, The	1971		2	2						2			1
Miss McLeod's reel (instrumental)	1973	1								1			
Mist Covered Mountains of Home	1979												
Mist Upon A Morning	1979		1	1								1	
Molly Bawn	1977	2	29		31	1 (1978)		2		1	2	13	12
Mursheen Durkin	1971		1	1								1	
Mushin Durkin	1969												

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Nancy Whiskey	1973		3	3							1	3	
Newfoundland Set Tunes (Instrumental)	1975												
New Port Town	1982												
Newport Town	1973												
Night Paddy Murphy Died, The	1973	1	6		7	1 (1972)				1	1		4
Nightingale, The	1969												
Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen, The	1971		2	2						1			1
Northern Lights of Old Aberdeen, The	1973												
Now I'm Sixty Four	1977	4	28		32	3 (1966, -1977	1		1		4	13	11
Old Johnny Butcher	1971												
Paddy Doyle the Poacher	1969												

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Paddy on the Railway	1970										1		
Parting Glass, The	1982		6	6					1			2	4
Parting Glass, The	1969												
Peat Bog Soldiers, The	1971												
Peggy Gordon	1971		11	11						3		1	7
Peter Amberlay	1973	6	7		13	9 (1964-178)		1		1			1
Polkas (instrumental)	1981												
Rattling Roaring Willie	1970		2	2								1	1
Reels	1981												
Reels (Sheehan's and The Sligo Maid) (Instrumental)	1977		9	9							2	4	3
Rising of the Moon, The	1970											1	3
Road to the Isles and the Beggar man	1973	4	25		29				2	7	5	11	4

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Rocks of Bawn	1971		5	5								2	3
Rocks of Bawn	1973												
Rocks of Merasheen	1973		13	13							2	5	6
Rocky Road to Dublin, The	1971		14	14								3	11
Rocky Road to Dublin, The	1973												
Roison Dubh	1971												
Rose of Mooncoin, The	1971	1	3		4	1 (1967)				1	1		1
Rovin' Irish Beau	1969												
Ryan's and Pittman's (also searched We'll Rant and We'll Roar)	1973	8	27		35		1	4	3	9	3	7	18
Ryan's Fancy	1971									1			
Ryan's Fancy	1970												
Sailor Courted. A	1973		2	2		1 (1974)						1	1
Sea People	1977		9	9								5	4

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Sea People is re-release of Brand New Songs	1979												
Selection of Jigs	1975												
Set Ulster Free	1970									1			1
Seven Old Ladies	1971	4				2 (1971, 1972)	1		1				
Ship is Ready to Sail Away, The	1982												
So Long (it's been good to know ya)	1975												
Sonny's Dream	1981	3	19		22		2			1	2	5	12
South Australia	1971		11	11						1		3	7
Star of Logy Bay	1972	9	46		55		1	4	4	13	5	15	13
Streets of London	1972		5	5								2	3
Swallow's Tail	1971		1	1								1	



Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Swallow's Tail, The	1973												
Sweet Forget Me Not	1981	3	39		42		1			2	4	14	21
This Land is Your Land	1971		2	2							2		
Tie Me Down	1979		4	4								1	3
Tinker's Poteen. A	1969												
Tipperary's in my dreams	1982												
Tiree Love Song, The	1971		2	2								1	1
Towersy Fair	1975												
Twenty One Years	1971		15	15						8	1		6
Twenty One Years	1973												
West Country Lady	1981		12	12								4	8
West's Awake, The	1971												
West's Awake, The	1981												
West's Awake, The	1970												1
Whiskey in The Jar	1971	1	24		25	1 (1978)			1			5	18

Song Title	Date	Before	After	Intro. By	Present Before	Munfla	No Date	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Whiskey in the Jar	1969												
Will You Go Lassie Go	1975												
Willie McBride	1981		1	1									1
Wreck of the Anna Maria, The	1971												
Yarmouth Town	1975		3	3						1			2
Total times recorded		123	891	343	656	62	13	23	36	118	82	292	420
Total songs		25	90	66	25	22	11	10	16	33	36	63	84

**Appendix Six: Island to Island Track List**

- Track 1 – Quinn’s Polka/ The Church Polka – (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)  
    1.1 Quinn’s Polka  
    1.2 The Church Polka
- Track 2 – Cook in the Galley/Pussycat Up in the Plumtree/Blueberry Quadrille – Doubles (Graham, Billy, Jason, Colin & Paddy)  
    2.1 Cook in the Galley  
    2.2 Pussycat Up in the Plumtree  
    2.3 Blueberry Quadrille
- Track 3- Lizzie’s Jig/Sam’s Jig – Doubles (Jason, Colin and Aidan)  
    3.1 Lizzie’s Jig  
    3.2 Sam’s Jig
- Track 4 – Johnny Doherty’s/ The Ravelled Hank of Yarn – Reels (Colin & Graham)  
    4.1 Johnny Doherty’s  
    4.2 The Ravelled Hank of Yarn
- Track 5 – The Job of Journeywork/The Moneymusk (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)  
    5.1 The Job of Journeywork  
    5.2 The Moneymusk
- Track 6 – Captains and Ships/ Newfoundland Spring/ West Bay Centre- Jigs (Graham, Billy, Jason, Colin & Paddy)  
    6.1 Captains and Ships  
    6.2 Newfoundland Spring  
    6.3 West Bay Centre
- Track 7 – Pádraig O’Keeffe’s/ Many’s a Wild Night – Polkas (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)  
    7.1 Pádraig O’Keeffe’s  
    7.2 Many’s a Wild Night
- Track 8 – Like you Would/ Kitty Jones – Hornpipes (Graham, Colin & Jason)  
    8.1 Like you would  
    8.2 Kitty Jones
- Track 9 – Tom Billy Murphy’s/Brennan’s Favourite – Jigs (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)  
    9.1 Tom Billy Murphy’s  
    9.2 Brennan’s Favourite
- Track 10 – The Flying Reel/ Hound’s Tune (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)  
    10.1 The Flying Reel  
    10.2 Hound’s Tune
- Track 11 – Who Stole the Miner’s Hat/ Hughie Wentzell’s/ Mussels in the Corner (Colin, Graham & Jason)  
    11.1 Who Stole the Miner’s Hat  
    11.2 Hughie Wentzell’s  
    11.3 Mussels in the Corner
- Track 12- Kilfenora Jig/Thomond Bridge – Jigs (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)

- 12.1 Kilfenora Jig
- 12.2 Thomond Bridge
- Track 13 – Billy Dinn’s –Jig and Reel (Graham, Billy, Jason, Colin & Paddy)
  - 13.1 Billy Dinn’s Jig
  - 13.2 Billy Dinn’s Reel
- Track 14 McGrath’s Reel/Mulhaire’s (Martin Mulhaire’s No.9) (Séamus, Aidan & Mick)
  - 14.1 McGrath’s Reel
  - 14.2 Mulhaire’s

**Appendix Seven: Asymmetrical Tunes on Island to Island**

Tune Name	Track Number	Form	Number of beats in A strain	Number of beats in B strain
Blueberry Quadrille	2.3	AA BB	17	16
Lizzie's Tune	3.1	AA BB	17	16
Sam's Jig	3.2	AA BB	17	18
Flying Reel	10.1	AAA BB	16	16
Hound's Tune	10.2	AA BB	16	18
West Bay Centre		AA BB	16	<p>Changing beat structure: Throughout 6+7+6+6 beats = 13+12 beats including repeat</p> <p>Final turn: 6+7+6+7 = 13+13 beats including repeat</p>
Captains and Ships	6.1	A BB	8	16
Mussels in the Corner	11.3	AA BB	17	16
Johnny Doherty's	4.1	AA BB	18	16

**Appendix Eight: Tune Origins and Associations for Island to Island**

Tune Title	Track Number	Performers	Nfld or Ireland	Alternate Title	Origin/Composer/Associated with	Recorded by (selected)
Quinn's Polka	1.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	Ireland		Co. Tyrone, Ireland	
Church Polka	1.2	See above	Ireland		Tipperary, Ireland	
Cook in the Galley	2.1	Graham, Billy, Jason, Colin & Paddy	Nfld		Ray Walsh, Bay de Verde, CB, NL	
Pussycat Up in the Plumtree	2.2	See above	Nfld	This is my love do you like her?	Played particularly around Bonavista Bay (English area), antecedent in Ireland	Wilf Doyle (Nfld) (1960); Bothy Band (1977)
Blueberry Quadrille	2.3	See above	Nfld	Blackberry Quadrille	Canadian Tune fr. repertoire of Don Messer; also in. repertoire of Rufus Guinchard	Don Messer
Lizzie's Jig	3.1	Jason, Colin and Aidan	Nfld		Fr. repertoire of Rufus Guinchard	
Sam's Jig	3.2	See above	Nfld		Nfld	
Johnny Doherty's	4.1	Colin & Graham	Ireland		Fr. repertoire of Johnny Doherty (1900-1980) Donegal, Ireland	
Ravelled Hank of Yarn	4.2	See above	Ireland		Fr. repertoire of Johnny Doherty Donegal, Ireland	
Job of Journeywork	5.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	Ireland		Munster	

Song Title	Track Number	Performer	NFLD /Ireland	Alternate Title	Origin/Composer/ Associated with	Recorded by
Money Musk	5.2	See above	Ireland		Scottish pipe tune (also played Ireland, Cape Breton, Ozarks, Romania)	
Captains and Ships	6.1	Graham, Billy, Jason, Colin & Paddy	Nfld		Nfld song	
Newfoundland Spring	6.2	See above	Nfld		Nfld	
West Bay Centre	6.3	See above	Nfld		Composed by Emile Benoit	
Padraig O'Keefe's	7.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	Ireland		Pádraig O'Keefe (1887-1963), <i>Sliabh Luchra</i> , Co. Kerry, Ireland	
Many's a Wild Night	7.2	See above	Ireland		Co. Cork, Ireland	
Like You Would	8.1	Graham, Colin & Jason	Nfld		Composed by Geoff Butler, Nfld (fr. repertoire of Figgy Duff)	
Kitty Jones	8.2	See above	Nfld/ Ireland	Stack of Wheat, Ann Carawath	Assoc. w/ Nfld, antecedent in Ireland	McNulty Family 1950
Tom Billy Murphy's	9.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	<i>Sliabh Luchra</i> , Ireland		For Tom Billy Murphy (1875-1943), fr. repertoire of Johnny O'Leary, Co. Cork	
Brennan's Favourite	9.2	See above	Ireland		For Richard Brennan fr. Killavail, Co. Sligo, played with Glenview Ceili Band	

Song Title	Track Number	Performers	Nfld/ Ireland	Alternate Title	Origin/Composer/ Associated with	Recorded by
Flying Reel	10.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	Nfld		Composed by Emile Benoit	
Hound's Tune	10.2	See above	Nfld		Composed by Rufus Guinchard	
Who Stole the Miner's Hat	11.1	Colin, Graham & Jason	Nfld		Bay de Verde, CB, Nfld	
Hughie Wentzell's	11.2	See above	Nfld		Fr. repertoire of Rufus Guinchard	
Mussels in the Corner	11.3	See above	Nfld / Ireland	Maggie in the Woods	Strongly assoc. w/ Nfld, (Fogo Island)	McNulty Family 1941
Kilfenora Jig	12.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	Ireland			Kilfenora Ceili Band
Thomond Bridge	12.2	See above	Ireland		Fr. repertoire of Kieran Kelly	
Billy Dinn's Jig	13.1	Graham, Billy, Jason, Colin & Paddy	Nfld		Composed by Billy Dinn, Goulds, NL	
Billy Dinn's Reel	13.2	See above	Nfld		Composed by Billy Dinn	
McGrath's Reel	14.1	Séamus, Aidan & Mick	Ireland		Composed by John McGrath Co. Mayo	
Mulhaire's	14.2	See above	Ireland		Composed by Martin Mulhaire	Tulla Ceili Band (1950s)



**Appendix Nine: List of Research Interviews and Contacts Cited in Text**

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## **Appendix Eleven: List of Archival Materials**

### ***Listed by Alphabetically by Collector's Name***

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### ***Listed by Archival Collection Number***

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- MUN 07-019 – *See above* Devine, Anne
- MUNFLA 66-024 – *See above* Halpert, Halpert and John Widdowson
- MUNFLA 75-083 – *See above* Devine, Anne
- MUNFLA 81-506 – *See above* Bradley, Gerald
- MUNFLA 85-040 – *See above* Hiscock, Philip
- MUNFLA 77-264 – *See above* Kellum, Jack and Wilf Wareham

MUNFLA 79-591 – *See above* Narváez, Peter  
MUNFLA 2008-002 – *See above* Osborne, Evelyn  
MUNFLA 73-45 – *See above* Posen, Sheldon and Michael Taft  
MUNFLA 81-267 – *See above* Rosenberg, Neil  
MUNFLA 2004-338 – *See above* Ryan, Denis  
MUNFLA 79-054 – *See above* Wareham, Wilf

## **Bibliography**

### *Please Note:*

All un-authored news items, or reviews, are listed by the publishing news source.

All advertisements are listed by periodical title.

All broadcasts are listed by the director or producer.

Prior to Confederation with Canada in 1949 Newfoundland and Labrador is noted in the bibliography simply as Newfoundland. After 1949, Newfoundland and Labrador is noted as NL.

Research Interviews and significant personal communications conducted by author can also be found in Appendix Nine. These are listed by the name of the interviewee.

Audiovisual materials can also be found in Appendix Ten.

Archival materials can also be found in Appendix Eleven.

Research Interviews are listed by the name of the interviewee. Concerning interviews from archival collections there are also separate bibliographic entries for each respective collector. The collection number is included in both entries. Archival interviews not conducted with the author may be cross-checked with Appendix Eleven.

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